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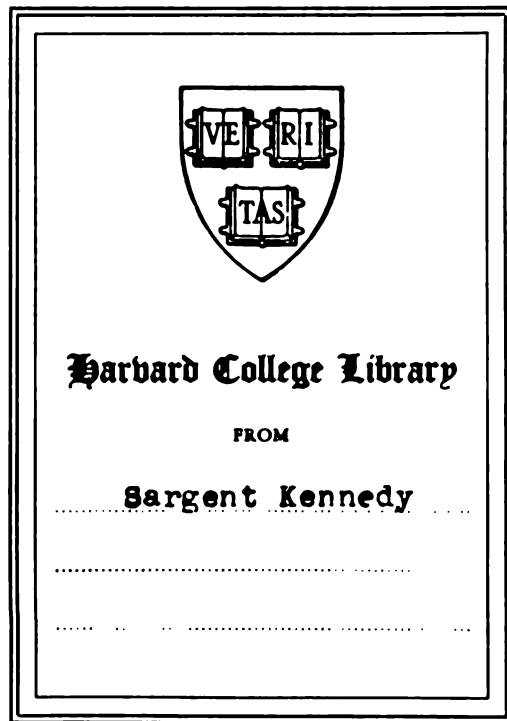
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HOLLAND

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A MOTHER AND CHILD OF AXEL

AXEL is a village of the province of Zeeland. The clothes of the feminine population are of an originality bordering on the grotesque, the aim and end of each being to attain an unparalleled breadth of appearance. The small tower in the background is that of the village hall.

HOLLAND

CHAPTER I

ZEELAND


ZEELAND and North Holland are the two most conservative provinces of the Netherlands. They retain the old customs and costumes for which Holland is celebrated. Their inhabitants do not seem to be bitten by the crave for modernity which, unfortunately for lovers of the picturesque, is rapidly changing the face of the country in other parts. It is probable either that in two or three decades the charming and varied national costumes will have disappeared over Holland generally, or that these treasures will be carefully stored away in a press as old as their fashion, only to be brought forth on momentous or festive occasions.

The geographical character of Zeeland is in itself unique. The slices of land constituting the province have been reclaimed from the North Sea, and are only kept above water by vigilant industry.

A week's stay in the village of Axel is one of the pleasantest memories of my Dutch travels. Nico was

fortunate enough to find a very amiable family from among whose members he was able to select his models. The father was a farmer ; the elder children worked in the fields ; the younger ones spent a few hours each day at school. I came to be on very good terms with them, and often went to the farm when Nico was painting. The eldest daughter, Wilhelmina, was a buxom girl, with a keen interest in her appearance.

The Axel costume is difficult and complicated, impossible of reconstruction by the uninitiated. The extraordinary erection on the shoulders is first built up in extremely stiff buckram, and is then covered with squares of coloured material, which vary in quality according to the means of the lady. Wilhelmina had a big box full of such squares. Brilliant red roses, surrounded by the most vivid green leaves, displayed themselves on a background of some equally startling hue. Stuffs such as these were her best, and she handled them with reverent fingers as she looked at me for admiration. I hope I was equal to the occasion. It was not the first time I had been lavish in praise of raiment which in my inmost heart I disapproved. Then, she had innumerable squares for ordinary wear—almost one for each day in the year, she proudly told me. Every time an Axel maiden dresses, these squares of material have to be pinned into position on the shoulders, over the buckram framework, and also into traditional folds on the back. As to their skirts, even I was surprised ; yet those who know will admit that, for one acquainted with the Sunday parades on the









Volendam dyke, nothing remains to be discovered as to the disguising of the human form by petticoats. My friend Wilhelmina was twice the circumference of a Volendam vrouw in her Sunday clothes! At first I concluded that this balloon-like appearance was produced by a species of crinoline; but no—it was a genuine collection of thick woollen skirts.

All the girls wear short sleeves. Redness of the arms is considered beautiful. The damsels pinch their skins to produce the rosy tint, and wear their sleeves so tight that circulation of the blood is hindered.

They indulge in much jewellery. From either side of their pretty caps juts out a corkscrew-like gold ornament, on which they hang delightful pendants, sometimes tipped with good-sized pearls. Then, of course, they have their coral necklace—a jet one for mourning, and, an ornament peculiar to Axel, triangular pieces of embroidery worn in front of the dresses. Some of these, sewn with real pearls or with white and red coral, are beautiful; others, more showy although not so highly prized, are embroidered with shells and small artificial flowers.

The portrait of an Axel boy reproduced in this book is that of one of the sons of this family—a charming and intelligent boy who died of consumption a few weeks after the picture was painted. This disease ravages the whole country: sad to say, there are but few families who are exempt from the taint. Doubtless the humidity of the atmosphere favours the growth of the bacilli, and one cannot help suspecting that the



universal habit of expectoration must do much towards spreading the disease.

Zeeland is a sunny, smiling country, and the people here seem brighter, less stolid, than their compatriots elsewhere. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that there is a good deal of Spanish blood among them.

In one of my wanderings I met an extraordinary person in tights, who was running, jumping, singing, and begging for alms. It appears that he is a relic of the days when every seigneur included in his suite a jester. From the time that he enters a village, he is supposed not to keep still for a moment, or even to walk in the ordinary way. I must confess that it was rather embarrassing to find oneself suddenly surrounded by this lone man, who ran round me until I had recovered sufficient presence of mind to realize what it was he wanted.

Here, as in all these quaintly-costumed villages of Holland, I found the tiny children the most grotesque and charming creatures possible. The boys wear very full skirts for the first few years of their lives ; but above their waists their fat bodies are compressed into the tightest of bodices, fixed firmly at the back with huge hooks and eyes. The effect of this compression is to make their heads look abnormally large, while their head-gear is ridiculously small. They wear gold or silver buttons at the neck, and ear-rings. These articles of jewellery serve to distinguish them from their sisters. The girls do not have their shoulders built up until they are three or four years old, when

they resemble nothing so much as big brightly-coloured butterflies.

Yerseke is another delightful Zeeland village. Here also Nico had many friends ; and, although ten years had passed since his last visit, and in the meantime he had shaved off a heavy beard and moustache, the people recognised him without a moment's hesitation. The visit of a stranger extending over a few weeks is quite an event in the village. There had been few changes in the place since Nico stayed there in his student days. Such an one was married ; another was dead ; some few had left the place to seek fortune in the towns. Time rolls quietly by in Yerseke, which seems to be far removed from the fever and unrest of modern town life.

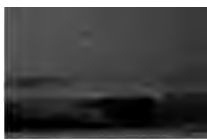
The majority of the inhabitants are engaged in oyster-farming. When the work is in full swing, the low narrow walls which mark the divisions between the beds are the only paths. The pretty laughing girls, with their large caps and leather water-boots which reach far past the knee, run quickly along, sometimes balancing a wheelbarrow full of oysters. If they do make a false step, their costume will bear a soaking ; indeed, one of the duties of these long-booted girls is to stand in the shallow water, for hours at a time, shovelling the oysters into baskets, which are then placed on wheelbarrows and carried off by boys and girls, either to the packing-sheds or merely to other beds.

The Yerseke cap, which is also the cap of the entire land of Goes, is particularly becoming. It is very stiffly

starched, occasionally mounted on wires, and stands well away from the face, forming a charming frame for a laughing youthful face, and lending an appearance of nun-like dignity to the matrons. A square gold ornament is pinned close to the face inside the lace halo. One wonders how they can keep their caps so stiff and clean, so spotlessly dainty, while pursuing their outdoor employments.

The boys and girls here, and even the "grown-ups," were eager to be sketched, and Nico's drawing materials attracted quite a following wherever we went, all offering themselves as models; but, such a good-tempered crowd were they, we were delighted to have them about us.

The chief street in this village is straight and broad, and on either side bordered by a stream. Thus, every house is approached by a bridge, each with a gaily-painted gate. The little squares of garden in front of the houses are intersected by many unnecessary and absurdly narrow little paths, paved with dazzling white oyster-shells. The girls who stay at home, or hire their services to well-to-do neighbours, are perforce more delicately dressed than their sisters in the mud of the oyster-beds, although these too blossom out on Sundays. It is only in this land of Goes that the Dutch maidens dress, as far as possible, in light colours. The large handkerchief, which they arrange as a sort of much-folded fichu, is often of pale blue or even white print, with a slight sprinkling of tiny flowers. The skirts are moderate in number and in thickness, and



ZEELAND

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the apron is of some light-coloured print. Thus, the general effect of the dress is bright.

Just at the entrance to the village is a particularly quaint mill. Trying to get the best view of it, Nico placed his stool on one of the spotless little bridges leading to a spotless little house. The best-looking old Dutchman you can imagine came slowly out of the house to inquire as to our intentions. He was dressed in weather-stained velvet with a short round coat, and the peculiar round-brimmed hat which is worn all over Zeeland. It suits the Dutch style of coiffure. I can picture to myself how the barber works. The hair is allowed to grow pretty long before it is cut at all; then, I think, it is brushed smoothly and evenly from a given point in the cranium; a bowl is clapped on the head, and the hair cut exactly by the brim; and there you have the Zeeland fashion! That, or something like it, must be the method of procedure. The old man, thus attired and barbered, was smoking a very long pipe, liberally draped with silver chains. The buttons at his throat were of finely-wrought gold, and everything pointed to his being a gentleman of means. In various stages of caps, three old ladies followed closely on his heels: we had evidently interrupted them in the delicate process of bonneting themselves for the afternoon. One was fully capped but for the exception of the gold ornament, which she held in her hand; another had on only the black cap which is for the protection of the white one, and also to show up the pattern of the beautiful lace; the third had

on a blue muslin cap, such as is sometimes worn when the wearer is conscious that her lace is extra fine, and she held in her hand another cap, starched and ironed.

The people were much more attractive than the mill. Nico suggested drawing them as they stood in front of their house, and promised to send them a photograph of the picture on his return to England. Mightily pleased, they fetched chairs and posed themselves. Nico persuaded one of them, who appeared to be a servant, to remain as she was when we first saw them ; but the others donned their caps.

After the sketch was finished they invited us into their house. One of the old ladies was sister to the old man, and had come on a fortnight's visit. She had unpacked her caps and was "doing them up": the room seemed full of them—I should think there were a dozen in all. The ladies could not recover from their astonishment when they found I did not understand Dutch. Having shown me the plain straw bonnets trimmed with closely-tucked ribbon which are worn at weddings, they explained the difference in form between the Catholic cap and the Protestant cap. One is square over the forehead, while the other is rounded ; the square one, which is the Catholic, is also curved in at the neck.

A springless omnibus makes the journey between Yerseke and the nearest station. When we left, we had the postman for a fellow-traveller. As he stopped at every house on the way to collect letters, I feared we should miss our train ; but, although we were many



minutes late, we were assured that the train would not be allowed to leave the station until the arrival of the omnibus ; and, sure enough, when we got there it was patiently waiting.

I have particularly refrained from saying much about the towns, especially the larger ones, as my space is limited, and I have sacrificed them to description of little-known villages and their delightful inhabitants ; but Middelburg is such an old-world and beautiful place that it must have a page to itself.

Quite half the people in the streets are costumed. One sees charming folk from the outlying country, who come to the town with fish and milk and vegetables. One meets milkcarts at every step and at all hours of the day. They are long and very low, and painted in brilliant blues or greens or reds. The horses are the massive animals that figure in pictures of the old Flemish School : it looks as if with one step backwards they must put their hind-legs among the milkcans. These enormous, brightly-polished brass jugs are well known. There are often more than one person in the cart. Generally they wear the Walcheren costume, with the tight caps and the hanging gold ornaments of the Goes head-dress. Besides the carts, one meets many girls with milkpails slung from either end of a yoke of wood shaped to fit their shoulders.

The town is full of corners which delight the lover of the beautiful. Notably there is a square surrounded by medieval buildings, now mostly used for municipal purposes. Countless tiny windows are protected by



wooden shutters painted, with a kind of hour-glass pattern, in a variety of colours on equally varied backgrounds. The square is planted with large trees ; and here the children come to play, and their parents to gossip on the benches in the shade.

Middelburg is only a few miles from Flushing. It seems wonderful that it should preserve this restful atmosphere so near to a great and bustling port.

The people in many of the smaller towns and villages of Holland practise a severe Calvinism. The pastor's word is paramount : he holds a tight rein over the simple and ignorant flock in his charge. His hard-and-fast rules frequently interfere with the artist's desire to perpetuate on canvas the beauty and the quaintness of the typical Dutch peasant.

In Holland, apparently, the clothes make the man. Even in some primitive places quite out of the beaten track, the fact of relinquishing their national costume seems to leave the people bereft of dignity, politeness, and the strength of character which is written so plainly on the rugged faces of the people of North Holland and Zeeland.

In Veere, a small town built on one of the islands of the province of Zeeland, Nico met with opposition in his search for models. We asked the proprietor of our hotel if he knew of any peasants who would allow their children to pose, and he directed us to the house of an elderly couple who had a most charming girl. We first saw the mother, who did not seem at all averse from the prospect of seeing her child in a picture, or



from accepting the few kwartjes which would be the modest requital ; but as the negotiations were coming to a satisfactory conclusion the father burst in upon us like a thunderbolt. He ordered the girl out of the room, shouted that we must be content with seeing her at a distance, and then, his temper getting the better of him, ordered us to depart.

When we related this episode to our landlord, he was in no wise disconcerted, but intimated that he had expected as much. The people, he said, were under a new pastor, who was instituting measures of reform in the little place, which has been a happy hunting-ground for artists for many summers. He seemed to think that we should have a similar reception everywhere. Still, Nico was not discouraged, and resumed his peregrinations through the town. His search was soon rewarded. We discovered a delightful family, members of an opposition church.

The children, who were quite pleased to sit, made excellent models. The worthy parents, who treated us courteously, were the proud possessors of fourteen children, the eldest of whom was eighteen. The elders of the family rose at four every morning, winter and summer alike, and worked in the fields. They lived chiefly on potatoes, the peeling of which occupied most of the eldest daughter's time. Sometimes when a meal was ended or about to begin, a dozen of them would stand round Nico and watch him painting the brother or sister perched in the midst. They would keep their eyes fixed on the artist with a persistent

stolid stare, as if wondering what sort of a strange lunatic was this, who was willing to distribute cents and dubbeltjes all round, for the sake of painting very ordinary children in their everyday clothes.

It was from these people I bought the rocking-horse which appears in one of the illustrations. I think it is a toy peculiar to Zeeland, and it has many virtues. It is cheap, indestructible, absolutely safe, and capable of amusing at least two children at once. That its capabilities were not equal to the demands of this large family of youngsters enabled me to buy it for my nursery. The quarrels for its possession in Holland were so loud and fierce that the mother threatened to burn the cherished toy; from which sad fate I rescued it.


The baby of the family, although not yet three, was wearing long broad trousers and an amusing cap decorated with a tuft of feathers. He was just able to talk, and was very shy: the only answer we could get from him on any subject was "Ne, he, moe," or "No, eh, mother." It must not be supposed that all my time was passed sitting at Nico's side watching the progress of his sketches. I found Veere a very interesting place, and, in spite of our unpleasant experience at the beginning of our stay, the majority of the people were civil.

We were there early in the spring, and I expected that with the advent of summer visitors, and the prospect of much well-paid posing, the scruples which interfered somewhat with Nico's modest wants would in great measure be overcome. Holland is at its best

early in the year. The colour, always brilliant, is especially striking against the background of soft gray sky. Just appearing from its winter coverlet of snow and weeks of soaking floods, the grass is vividly green; and the black outline of the trees, as yet scarcely showing tender buds, give the sombre touch needed to make the picture perfect. This almost too well-watered land, with its rich juicy pastures and its equable climate, is naturally a paradise for farmers. The cows are always the most important, and often the best-cared-for, members of the family. They live under the same roof as their owners. Whoever or whatever suffers in hard times, the cows are the first consideration.

Strangely enough, one rarely gets butter fit to eat. Of course, as residents will hotly contend, good butter is to be had; but the greater part of the best butter goes to the English market. The poor classes, and even the farmers, content themselves with margarine.

We were lunching at a little inn near the pretty town of Goes. Meat was not to be had; all that the good people could offer us was eggs. Now, at Volendam, where we passed the winter, the eggs are horribly fishy, for the hens pick most of their meals from the heaps of small dead fish which lie about everywhere. With this experience in my mind, I was not enthusiastic at the prospect of a meal of eggs. We sat down to a table at which a Dutchman was already seated. I hadn't noticed him, when I innocently said to Nico, who had already chipped an egg, "Are the eggs good here?" Our neighbour gave some kind of a grunt, and




looked at him. He grew very red ; rising from his seat, he glared at me; and then in broken English, which I will not attempt to reproduce exactly, he said : " You say the eggs are bad in Holland. They are not bad in Zeeland." He paused, pulled himself together, added slowly and emphatically, " We get *our* eggs from birds," and then stalked out of the room. Although I hardly knew why, I felt snubbed and conscience-stricken. Afterwards I regretted that I had not asked Nico to go after him and ask him how he thought we manufactured eggs in England ! I thought, too, of Dan Leno and his famous dissertation on eggs. Certainly, as he says, there are eggs *and* eggs. Nowhere does that fact impress itself more than in Holland. The Irishman who considered himself lucky to be provided with a chicken when he had only paid for an egg would doubtless have been equally grateful to have the soupçon of fish added to his inexpensive meal.


That afternoon we wandered through the streets of Goes, a typical Dutch town. One of the small towns is so much like another that description is only repetition. You will generally find a few charming old houses, and perhaps a disproportionately large church with a fine tower. Then, there is the market-place, pleasant to look upon if crowded with costumed peasants selling their various country produce. You note how wonderfully their costume seems to suit their rather clumsy bodies and patient faces. Little details of colouring and of architecture differ sufficiently to make each spot worth a visit from the artist; but to

the ordinary traveller the towns would appear humdrum places not worth coming to see.

All over Zeeland a peculiar courting custom, which at the first blush would seem rather at variance with the severe morality of the people, is held in favour. Custom condones many strange things, and perhaps, especially as their individual enjoyment would suffer from close self-criticism, the inconsistency of practice with precept does not penetrate the rather dull minds of the Zeeland lovers. On the occasion of the annual kermis, or fair, a feast which is universal all over Holland, the date varying in the different provinces and towns, the Dutch peasants give themselves over for a day or two to feasting and riotous living. Drinking, clumsy dancing, and monotonous singing, constitute their highest conception of amusement. For this festivity they save up their spare cash all through the year ; and when at last the eventful day has passed, it is incredible how many guldens have gone from the pockets of the young men and maidens into the money-bags of the booth people who congregate for the occasion. In Zeeland the old folks content themselves with many extra glasses of schiedam, and leave the excitements of the day to their juniors. At dawn the big, old-fashioned carts of the farmers of the province, drawn by enormous Flemish horses with flowing manes and tails, are packed tightly with boys and girls all dressed in their best. The best in the case of the girls is of such dimensions that the sympathetic spectator fears they will be badly crushed when they emerge




from the tightly-packed cart. A procession of such vehicles starts off amid shouts of laughter and chaffing not too refined. The whole crowd descends at each inn it passes on the way, and the young men treat the rosy damsels of their choice to various drinks more or less intoxicating. It is only to be expected that by the time the trippers reach their destination the giggling bashfulness of the start has disappeared, and the various couples, excited and loud-voiced, are ready for any fun that may come in their way. Highly amusing everything appears to these young folk in their unwonted stimulation. The smallest incident provokes shouts of laughter. At this time of the day all the world is at peace with his neighbour, and the quarrelsome stage has not been reached. Arrived at the scene of the fair, the horses are carefully stabled and the carts drawn up in long lines in the narrow roads outside the various inns. An important item in the programme is to eat great quantities of the rather indigestible cakes prepared and cooked before the eyes of the purchaser. The woman who makes these delicacies stands on a platform in front of a booth. She has before her three large and handsome brass pots, containing the ingredients necessary to make the batter of which the cakes are composed. She rapidly ladles the batter into small moulds placed over a wood fire at her side. An assistant stands near, fork in hand, and in spite of smoke and heat turns the cakes with a dexterity only to be acquired by practice. When the poffertjes are done to a turn, they are piled on a plate, well buttered



and sprinkled with sugar, and then carried to the hungry customers, who are accommodated with chairs and tables in an adjoining tent. The merry-go-rounds and the swinging-boats are well filled during the afternoon. It is entrancing to see a much-petticoated girl balancing her balloon-like proportions on a small and almost invisible wooden horse! Fortunately, her weight is not to be judged by appearances. The swain, in suit of velveteen, with many gold and silver buttons, valiantly and amorously holds his giggling sweetheart round the waist, to insure her against a fall as far as in him lies. Later these amusements pall. The young people, more than half tipsy, I fear, amuse themselves for hours in an aimless and vigorous movement which they believe to be dancing. A row of girls and youths join hand-in-hand, seven or eight together, and, jumping heavily from one foot to the other, make their way through the narrow streets, singing a monotonous song with which they endeavour to keep time. A verse of the festive lay generally consists of four or five words repeated again and again with emphasis. This noisy amusement contents them until they are tired. After more drinks, which include a sweet and very nasty champagne, they begin to think of home. Aided by sleepy ostlers, also overcome, they manage to harness the horses; again they pack themselves into the carts, and start on the homeward journey. Fortunately, Dutch roads are straight and level, and the horses are sensible beasts, able to find their way without much guidance; otherwise the party might easily find them-

selves in one of the canals, which are generally parallel with the road, and the day would have a wet and unpleasant ending. The return is quiet enough. The merry-makers are silenced by fatigue and a drunken sleepiness. Occasionally a convivial soul, still inclined to express his joy in song, will endeavour to start the inspiring chorus which has accompanied him through the happy hours; but he does not meet with much encouragement, and the song dies away. The absolute liberty given to the young people on this day is intended to promote matrimonial desires, as it does. Two or three months after the kermis not a few weddings, attributed directly to the feast, are announced. Somehow, the day's happiness is much less offensive than it might be were they not all such children of Nature. They have no thought of wrong-doing. It is their habitual abstemiousness from pleasure that causes them to be so easily overcome by drink and excitement on this one day of all the year.

A Zeeland wedding is interesting. Early in the day the procession leaves the home of the bride, at which all the guests have assembled. The Zeeland farmers are very well-to-do, and no expense is spared. The party divide themselves into couples, and drive off in little two-wheeled covered chaises chastely decorated with flowers and tinsel, and drawn by a gaily-caparisoned steed, whose mane and tail are elaborately plaited with bright ribbons. I have seen thirty or forty of these carts in a wedding procession. They drive to an inn, where they take out the horses and draw up the



carriages in a long line. All the women wear straw bonnets over their best caps ; and the men, decorated with as many buttons as it is possible to sew on a suit, sit on the edge of their chairs, looking fully conscious of their clothes. After a drink all round, and a few minutes' pause, the policeman appears and informs them that the Burgomaster awaits them. Thereupon the procession starts again, this time on foot, through the narrow streets of the town, each man smoking the long cigar of ceremony. The company enter the big room of the town-hall, and find the Burgomaster sitting at a long table. Chairs are placed opposite to him for the bride and bridegroom ; their parents sit on either side ; and the various relations arrange themselves according to intricate rules of precedence. The Mayor then makes them a fatherly speech on the importance of the marriage tie, and gives much good advice, which often reduces the assembly to tears. Various registers are signed, and after much hand-shaking the party leaves the town-hall and returns to the hotel. Little bridesmaids walk before the bride at the head of the procession and strew the ground with gay confetti. Arrived at the hotel, the landlord offers a glass of wine to the bridegroom, who quaffs to the health of the company. The glass is refilled and handed to the bride, who also drinks. It is then handed to the respective parents in succession. All this drinking from the same glass symbolizes the happy union of the families. Then the horses are harnessed, and the party returns to the farm, where many of the less-intimate

friends are waiting. Follows the wedding-feast, which lasts for many hours.

In Zeeland, where early marriages are favoured, the young couple live with the parents of the bridegroom until he is old enough to manage a farm of his own. The pair whose wedding I witnessed at Axel were aged respectively sixteen and seventeen, and the match had been made at the previous kermis.

On an occasion such as a wedding or a kermis, one has many opportunities of seeing gorgeous caps, clothes, and jewellery. There is one remarkably beautiful cap worn by the boer women of old Beerland, a Zeeland island where they have not yet adopted modern dress. It fits the head closely and flares out all round, curved and stiffened, to prevent it falling on the face; it reaches almost to the waist behind. The young girls make the cap of muslin, with only the headpiece of lace; but the well-to-do farmers' wives make theirs with very broad and exquisitely fine lace, which takes the place of the muslin. These caps are mounted on almost invisible wire, and it is a day's work to starch and get them up. I was told that such a cap, apart from the gold ornaments, which are often elaborate, costs as much as 70 gulden (nearly £6).

As for their jewellery, all over Zeeland where costume is worn many a girl has at least £10 worth on at all times; and poorer members of the community are content to live on a monotonous diet of potatoes and bacon fat in order to appear on Sundays and week-days as expensively clothed as their well-to-do neighbours.

In one of the little towns, with the church, as usual, hugely out of proportion to the congregation, we were admiring the clock-tower and the very sweet tones of the chimes, which were playing the national hymn. An old man accosted us, and, apparently flattered and pleased at our obvious admiration, volunteered the information that he was the Town-Clock Man, and that if we would meet him at the tower that evening he would take us up and show us the works. Needless to say, we gladly availed ourselves of his offer, and were waiting punctually in the market-place at the appointed time. It was a rough night early in the spring ; there was a heavy gale, and the sky was black as ink. Our old friend seemed long in making his appearance, and, becoming impatient, we asked the way to his house, built in the shadow of the church. His wife, engaged in peeling potatoes for the evening meal of her two sons, field-labourers, was the cause of the delay. The old couple were obliged to use their joint efforts to wind the clock. It is considered rather an honourable post, this of Clock-winder, although not a very lucrative one. The old man succeeded his father, to whom the office had passed from his father, and so on as far back as the making of the clock. The same faithful family had always attended to its needs.

Attracted by a rumour that the foreign artist and his wife were going to wind the clock, the policeman was waiting before the building. In the big hall an old brass lamp shed a faint light, which served to emphasize the shadows. The old woman leading the way, we

climbed the narrow stairs in single file. The wind howled through the windows, and the building swayed. However, we reached the top safely. I was surprised to see the immense weight these two old people had to wind up every night in order to keep the chimes from running down. The pendulum was four yards long and a yard across, a weight of solid black stone. Nico helped them to wind up, and just as they had concluded, with much panting and groaning from the old couple, the clock struck nine. The strokes were like cannon-shots, and shook the tower to its foundations.

It was quite an adventure for us—the pitch darkness, only illumined by the small lamp the woman carried, and the poor old creature herself helping to wind up the great weight at the top of the swaying tower, her white lace cap and ornaments gleaming through the darkness, and all her thoughts on the potatoes down in the little house, leaning against the walls of the lovely old Gothic church!

For them it was but a detail of their lives, a wearisome and ill-paid duty ; still, the office was treasured with pride, as evidence of the antiquity and respectability of their family.

WOMAN OF HULST

HULST is a small village in the South of Zeeland. This costume is very remarkable. The women are noted for their good looks.

halting for a moment, while their leader asked in whose honour the celebration might be, and the name of the road in which his house was situated. The enthusiasm was not damped by any details.

In this gay little town with the long name the band plays every night in the market-place, and market is held every day in the week. An interesting sight is this same big square. The stalls have stretched over them, as a rule, a kind of sheet, not in the pyramidal shape we associate with tents, but tied flat across to the four corners of the stall; the awnings are pretty much of a height, and from a little distance these temporary roofs are all that can be seen. Among the stalls the spectacle is of the liveliest kind. Most of the women wear festive-looking lace caps, wreathed with thick garlands of flowers; these are generally white, but sometimes they are blue forget-me-nots, and again flowers of a saffron hue and ragged blossoms, perhaps intended for Japanese chrysanthemums. I presume that a new wreath is generally composed of one kind of blossom; but on some caps I noticed heterogeneous collections of flowers—roses, orange-blossoms, hyacinths, forget-me-nots, and many strange flowers unclassified by the botanist, and as yet only to be met with in the gardens where artificial blooms are culled. The back of the caps is further decorated with streamers of white satin ribbon, giving to the staid peasants a wedding-bouquet sort of appearance which is ludicrous and incongruous. One would say that such a gay cap would look well as a frame

for the rosy face of a farmer's daughter ; but in this upside-down little country the young girls wear black caps of the same shape, though without the decorations, and these sombre caps, with the black dresses, give them the appearance of the Beguines sedately walking the streets of old Belgian towns. Another peculiarity of their dress is the scanty jacket-like shawl, drawn in at the waist, which they all wear. Trimmed with a narrow black fringe, it gives an air of demureness, and even a certain grace, to the figure whose heavy build or harsh angles it disguises. These much-beflowered caps, I noticed, were more worn by the market-women than by the inhabitants of the town, who wear a cap of which the bonnet part, fitting closely to the head, is of lace, and the stiff wings standing out are starched muslin.

In different parts of the market-place piles of carefully-sorted rubbish were emptied on the bricks. These roused my interest. I noticed one pile of very dirty linen collars, another of odds and ends of ribbon ; here was a mass of many-coloured braids, and there a woman turning over a heap of those small patterns of materials one gets as samples from shops. Doubtless she wanted them for making those picturesque patches which beautify while renewing the garments of both sexes in Holland. In many instances the piles of rubbish were not so easy to classify ; but those I have mentioned were the most popular.

The sides of the market were devoted to the sale of exceedingly odorous cheese and still more objectionable



fish. One particular preparation of dried cod, tied up in small bundles of even lengths, has the vilest smell it is possible to imagine. This unsavoury food is sold all over the country, and, especially, is always to be found in the shops where sabots are for sale. I do not recognise any connection between the two except that they are equally unfit for human food. Cod in this state is known by the rather suggestive name of "stock fish."

We left this evil corner in less time than it has taken me to describe it, and wandered through the network of booths, ducking our heads, to avoid the low awnings, until we came to quite a pleasant corner, where the sale of flowers and vegetables was in full swing. And such delicious green stuff was there!—tender lettuces, spotless cauliflowers, baskets of fresh juicy spinach-leaves, bunches of delicate young carrots (which I have never tasted to such perfection as in Holland), and bundles of white asparagus. Yet in all our wanderings we always had to put up with the tinned article! I had had a poor idea of Holland as a vegetable-growing country; but it was dispelled for ever at the sight of these red and blue carts, full of the most luscious garden produce then in season.

The morning was growing old, and the market was almost over; groups of women in their flower-bedecked caps or in those of the winged kind sat round their buckets, filled with burning peat, brewing coffee and eating sandwiches of black and white bread. This was the time to admire the charming effects of grouping and colour against the background of the old

gabled roofs which surrounded the market-place. Neatly-dressed serving-maids, with white frilled caps tied under their chins in big muslin bows, tripped by, bringing Wilhelminje or Nicholas home from school, and stopping on their way to bargain with a sturdy country-woman about a crisp lettuce for the mid-day salad or a young cabbage for the afternoon soup.


'sHertogenbosch has a very fine Gothic church. I do not remember the date it bears; but I remarked it as one of the churches built and retained by Catholics. North Brabant is one of the few provinces which have not departed from the ancient faith. That is why the Church of St. John has not been mutilated, stripped of ornaments, and had its interior severely hidden by whitewash. Fortunately, the gorgeous architecture of many fine old churches must perforce remain as monument to the faith which erected them, and as a guarantee that the interiors were equally beautiful before the Lutherans despoiled them of all their glorious decorations, giving the final touch of bleakness and bareness by a pall of whitewash. We in England may esteem ourselves fortunate that those who now possess the beautiful old Catholic cathedrals and churches treat them with reverent care.

The scenery of North Brabant consists mostly of the wide stretches of moorland which are characteristic of many parts of Holland. These Dutch moors, which are full of variegated colours, are perhaps more pleasing to the eye than the toy-box scenery of other parts, with its vivid colouring, its bright contrasts, and its sharply

defined lines. In the neighbourhood of human habitations striking features in the landscape are the storks' nests. A long pole driven into the ground supports a sort of round, open wicker-basket lined with twigs and straw. Storks adopt the basket for their nest, lay their eggs in it, and bring up a family on the premises. These birds, which are looked upon with favour, are of great service in Holland. Being voracious, they check the increase of obnoxious reptiles and insects. Incidentally they devour myriads of small harmless fish in the inland canals, and are the sworn enemies of frogs. The country people regard them with an almost superstitious reverence, and think themselves in luck when a pair of storks build their nest on the top of a farmhouse. There is, I believe, a law which inflicts a penalty on any person found guilty of killing a stork ; consequently, the birds are numerous and tame.

On all these vast stretches of moorland game is plentiful ; pheasants, hares, and partridges are carefully preserved. The peasants are daring and unscrupulous poachers. On the ground that the animals are as natural to the land as the flowers, and therefore should by right belong equally to everyone, they refuse to admit culpability. Good wild-duck shooting is to be obtained in many parts. I have occasionally enjoyed the spoils, which are tender and succulent.


The Dutch methods of taxation are peculiar. On learning that there is a tax on every window, one ceases to wonder at the want of air and light which one notices in so many of the houses. Of all the



ill-thought-out taxes, surely this is the most mischievous! Yet it is not so long since this same window-tax was repealed in our own land. A tax is imposed on every servant, and even on the daughters of the house if they do the work of a servant in performing the ordinary domestic duties. There are taxes on all articles of furniture beyond those which are really necessary. In the seventeenth century a tax was imposed on boots and shoes. The amount of the tax was determined by the size of the articles, and thus a premium was placed on the vanity of maidens, always and in all countries anxious to have small feet.

In several towns the streets were much higher than the ground-floors of the houses. I was sufficiently interested to find out the reason. At first one might think that the houses were built with basements, as is often the case in England; but in this watery land such a thing as a dug-out foundation is unknown. The explanation is that the streets have been gradually raised in order to improve the drainage. In consequence, what were the original and literal *rez-de-chaussée* of the houses present a half-buried appearance, and in rainy weather are often half-filled with water, which has to be baled out at the expense of much time and trouble. This must be a very insanitary state of things.

To build a house in Holland, it is generally necessary to make a solid foundation of wooden piles, driven deep into the soft ground side by side, and only a few inches apart. When a sufficient surface has been formed



in this way, the tops of the piles are levelled, and strong beams of oak are laid over them, to form a solid ground and a foundation for the walls. As, after all these precautions have been taken, the walls are still too damp for paper to adhere to them, a coarse canvas is nailed to stretchers fitted to the walls, and receives the paper successfully. This explains the apparent dryness of a Dutch house, which, when one considers the extreme dampness of the climate, is a puzzle to those who are ignorant of the secrets of construction. The windows are protected from outside curiosity by a screen of fine blue muslin tightly stretched on a black frame, which, while it renders those inside the house quite invisible, does not prevent them from having a full view of the street. Their view of what goes on in the street is enlarged by little mirrors outside the window. By looking upon the mirrors the gossips taking their tea within the shelter of the muslin blind can satisfy their curiosity as to the passers-by before these come within the range of vision.

In the towns land is too valuable to allow to the generality of householders a garden, or even the almost indispensable backyard, and many necessary domestic duties, such as the shaking of mats and the disposal of ashes, are performed in the full publicity of the open streets. The police put a limit to the hours at which such offices may be performed; but the early-rising stranger may meet with many obstructions during his walk through the narrow streets.

The Dutch servants keep the windows in a condi-

A BOY OF GOES

with the flower-starred meadows stretching on either side, the land looks peaceful enough now ; and there is a characteristic of Dutch roads which is worthy of remark, the fine trees on either side. There is a reason for these trees besides the obvious one that they please both the eye and the nostrils of the traveller. The roots of the trees strengthen the roads by holding the loose earth together, and thus allowing it to solidify. This is the more needed because the roads are above the level of the fields, and have a tendency to give way under the pressure of traffic.

We descended (as they say in France) at a funny little hotel in one of the small towns of North Brabant. Our host was the owner of a geyser bath. He was proud of the possession, and, carrying a portmanteau in either hand, took us to see it before showing us the room where we were to pass the night. Glad to be able to encourage such enterprise, I ordered a bath to be prepared for me at a certain hour. As I did so, I fancied that I saw a worried look creep over his stolid, good-natured countenance ; but I thought no more of the matter, and gaily ordered an early meal, that I might have time for a digestive stroll before indulging in the luxury of a hot bath. The hour arrived, and I joyously arrayed myself in my dressing-gown, and wandered through long, narrow passages till I reached the small cupboard which evidently had not been designed by the architect for a bath-room. As I turned the last corner and entered the little passage, my ears were assailed by a babel of sounds. To my horror, I found myself in a crowd of people evidently inspecting my bath. I retreated ; but

PEASANT BOY OF THE LAND OF GOES

REMARK the extraordinary coiffure, which is as much a part of the costume as is the quaint round cap and the gold buttons on the shirt-collar.

mischievous spirit, to encourage the vanity which is no doubt latent in their mild bosoms. In any case, to the artist's eye the mantle is not decorative. Beauty unadorned, especially when endowed by Nature with a coat of paintable black and white patches, is infinitely preferable to beauty in a sackcloth garment. I must say, however, that the appearance of these animals rejoiced my flippant eye. The amusing spectacle, although not by any means confined to North Brabant, is sufficiently rare in other parts of the country only to be met with by good luck.

It is in this province that one sees long, low carts drawn by big horses harnessed with rope. The stranger is surprised on watching these equipages turning a corner and advancing towards him. First comes the big horse, very lightly harnessed, apparently with bits of string ; and then, yards away from this evidently runaway beast, the long springless cart slowly turns the corner in the wake of the horse, which on closer examination is seen to be connected with it. The scene reminds one of the small Volendamer's cigar, the burning tip of which, attached to several inches of the weed, is seen round a corner before the smoker of some three or four summers comes into view.

In Holland it is quite a common occurrence to be stopped in the street and asked for a light by smokers of such tender years that they must have only just left their mothers' apron-strings. Smoking is not an extravagant luxury. The cigars of the large majority are sold at the rate of five a penny. Proud and critical

persons give as much as five, or even ten, cents for a single weed ; but I have been told by smokers of other than Dutch nationality that it is possible to paint satisfactorily to the accompaniment of a three-cent cigar. Nico always carried a stock of these cheap luxuries for the purpose of conciliating and loosening the tongues of coachmen, farmers, and others with whom it was often desirable to converse. I believe that a good deal of tobacco is grown in Holland, and that as much as possible is smuggled into Germany. I have trained myself to put up with many things in Holland ; but there is one thing which still arouses my anger, it is the sight of a very long and evil cigar between the lips of the man who smokes in the "Niet Rookten" divisions of the tramcars, and calmly insists upon having the car as nearly as possible hermetically closed. The possession of a fat one-cent cigar between the lips seems to lend him a supercilious indifference to muttered threats of appealing to the conductor which is unattainable by the smoker of the homely pipe or the comparatively inoffensive cigarette.

These uncultured Dutchmen have a wonderful knowledge of their country's great masters of art. Even the driver and the conductor of the tramcar have all the names at their fingers' ends. Besides being more or less familiar with such men as Rembrandt, Van den Beers, and Franz Hals, they are eager to discuss, with complete knowledge, the works of the Maris family, Joseph Israel, Anton Mauve, and all the other wonderful geniuses which the little country produced in the nineteenth

century, providing so much more than her share to the monument of art raised by Europe in our later days. Unfortunately, this appreciation of things beautiful does not have any visible effect on the taste in houses and dress of the untravelled Dutch, who fill their homes with brightly polished and hideously-carved modern furniture, much elaborate gilding, and many useless and inexcusable ornaments. Antimacassars and artificial flowers are prominent in the furnishing of the average villa. In justice be it said, however, that there are to-day in Holland many beautiful homes furnished with all that art and refinement can suggest. These usually belong to the nobility or to the much-travelled class, both of whom are an exceedingly pleasant people.

Bergen op Zoom, in North Brabant, is another town with a name out of all proportion to its size and interest. It is old, out of the way of movement and prosperity; but of late years the surrounding land has been devoted to the cultivation of beetroot for the purpose of sugar-making, so that the little town may yet have days of commercial glory. My slight acquaintance with Bergen op Zoom was made while we were waiting for the *table d'hôte* at a small hotel.

The Dutch have their dinner at the improbable hour of four, and presumably provide very exactly for the needs of their guests. Many times had we been fed on eggs or raw beefsteak because we had missed the *table d'hôte*, at which, we were told, every imaginable dainty had been obtainable, but evidently in such well-

judged quantities that half an hour after the meal was over not a vestige remained. I must confess that I looked upon the *table d'hôte* and the *plats du jour* as high-sounding myths. At Bergen op Zoom we were offered a choice of pickled eels or eggs at half-past two, but determined to take the printed menu at its word and wait till four o'clock. Honestly, I do not believe that hunger was the cause of my want of interest in the town: I do not think we passed through many places less interesting. The hour before our meal seemed never-ending. At last the happy moment arrived. I was pleasantly surprised, although Nico insisted that such meals were of everyday occurrence in any decent restaurant in Holland. Except in the large towns, I regret to say, this was my first and last really good meal not specially prepared for us. We revelled in delicious soup, liberally garnished with little balls of minced meat. Fish there was none; but we had a good joint of roast beef, cut, without bone or fat, from I know not what part of the animal. Then came a fine large roll of well-seasoned and finely-chopped meat served with a delicious gravy—a characteristic Dutch dish known as “gehakt.” We had no sweets; but there were oranges, a round Edam cheese, plenty of crisp rusks, and doubtful margarine. With this ample meal we drank rather sour beer, and for the whole we paid about five shillings for the two of us.

In Holland, as in many other Continental countries, the women are much engaged in field labour, and the various strange dresses in certain parts of the Nether-

lands add a piquancy to the sight. Indeed, it can well be imagined that the women and girls, clothed in the exaggerated costumes made familiar to most people by picture post-cards, and armed with pitchforks and spades, or even guiding the plough, present to the eye of the beholder a picture quaint and amusing. In Brabant, as I have mentioned, a rather graceful part of the feminine costume is the black-fringed shawl, falling below the elbows and tailing off to below the waist at the back. They would not be Dutch peasant-women if they did not prefer this inconvenient garment during the most arduous of their agricultural pursuits. From the painter's point of view their appearance is a charming addition to the landscape. The much-criticised cape gives them a dilettante air, in spite of their business-like implements, as of Jane Austen's spinsters indulging in a little dainty gardening among pinks and mignonette. The simpler costumes, such as those of Walcheren and Guelderland, looked delightful and appropriate in the fields; but it must be admitted that the Axel and Zeeland women are rather less congruous.

Everywhere in the land the beautifully-capped women seem to take a delight in disfiguring themselves by planting a bonnet on the top of the cap—and such a bonnet! It is that kind of heavily-trimmed structure peculiar in England to the fat-landlady type of person who is a widow and has seen better days. The mass of feathers, flowers, and bugles, whilst it eminently befits this lady, is inappropriate and unbecoming to

the pleasant-faced and comfortable Dutch women, who are already possessed of an exquisite headgear. It is the first step to the days when the lace and gold will be discarded entirely in favour of the atrocity which now adorns simultaneously the same head.

CHAPTER III

SOUTH HOLLAND

"HOLLAND," as denoting the whole of the kingdom governed by the Dutch Queen, is a word unknown in the country itself. There the term is applied only to the provinces known as North Holland and South Holland. The title of the collection of eleven provinces is "The Netherlands." In the nine remaining provinces these two divisions are collectively known as "Holland." Thus, a peasant describing the whereabouts of his children will tell you that he has two daughters in service in Holland, a son farming in Guelderland, and so on.

Practically all the importance of Holland concentrates in these two provinces of North and South Holland, which include Amsterdam, the commercial capital, in the northern half, and the Hague, the diplomatic and social capital, in the south. South Holland is cut up not only by the inroads of the sea, but still more by the mouths of the Rhine and the Maas, which flow into the North Sea.

It is a delightfully fertile country. Large herds or cows graze in the very green meadows; the smaller

was about, and would lift up her black head and utter a loud sound—whether a word of protest or of welcome must remain a matter of doubt. Suddenly from a little one-storied and evidently one-roomed cottage in the middle of a field an old woman appeared, running as fast as her legs would carry her down the gentle declivity which stretched between her cottage and the canal. She shouted and gesticulated wildly, and the captain of our boat called to the small barefooted person who was leading our horse along the tow-path to pull up his steed until he should find out what was to do. The old woman panted out some explanation, the drift of which we failed to catch, and the captain beckoned to one of his men, who quickly stepped ashore and followed the old woman to her cottage. A moment after his arrival she appeared again at her door, wildly signing that more men should be sent. This time the captain sent the boy who was in charge of the horse. But the boy was evidently not of much use, for the old woman again appeared at her door, screaming for more men to be sent. All the passengers were peasants, except ourselves and a young priest, and they watched with calm indifference. We ourselves were excited. The young priest, wrapped in his breviary, did not raise his eyes. At last the captain himself started off, taking with him a sturdy young peasant from among the passengers. After a long interval, during which the horse walked away from the boat in search of better grass, tightening the towline, causing the boat to shake throughout and then to bump

against the canal bank, the cottage door opened to its fullest extent, and the group of men appeared, bearing in their midst a dark mass. The old woman ran round them screaming and throwing her hands and arms about like a mad thing. A horrible shiver ran through me. This is some terrible village tragedy, thought I, and these primitive people will think nothing of placing a ghastly mutilated corpse on the deck, to be conveyed to the nearest police-station.

I was not entirely wrong. The large dark mass was a corpse, but only that of a black cow. Its head was tied up in a sack ; beyond that there was no attempt at covering or disguising it. Evidently it had been kept for a time in the cottage. I can scarcely imagine that the old woman herself had killed the cow ; but there were certainly no men belonging to her in the group that carried the animal, and finally plumped it down on the boat. I don't know what happened to it in the end. Perhaps its destination was the nearest butcher, in which case I hope it had not died a natural death.

As we did not care for its company, we got out at the next village, which, fortunately, happened to be a tramway station. The tram, when it came, took us to Gouda, where are manufactured the long clay pipes which one sees so often between the lips of the farmers—all over the country. Much more interesting and important than pipes are the stained-glass windows in the church. Twenty-eight in all, they date from the sixteenth century, and are in almost perfect con-

dition. I doubt if such a perfect and complete series of old stained glass is to be found in the world.

We wandered about the country, now in springless carts, anon in small boats on the canals ; and, when we had the doubtful luck to fall in with them, making use of the railways and the tramways, or, more pleasant though less practical, the local omnibus, which starts once a day from almost every village to the nearest large town.

South Holland is peaceful and beautiful. The vivid colouring of the emerald meadows spells richness to the farmer and joy to the artist.

Across country, by untrodden tracks, we journeyed to Dordrecht. This delightfully crooked town abounds in corners and waterways, which reminded me of the canals in the poorer parts of Venice. The one-arched bridges over the narrow canals, the tottering houses rising up from the still, green waters, the occasional splash which breaks the silence as the housewife empties her basketful of rubbish into the canal, even the brightly-painted shutters—all help the illusion that one is standing on a bridge over a quiet canal near the public gardens in the beautiful water city on the Adriatic. A few turns to right or left, and the dream vanishes ; instead of the canal there are narrow, uneven streets peopled with Dutch figures and bordered by houses which have grown crooked through the gradual subsidence of the land. Let us hope that the day is far distant when the safety of these houses may be called in question. The old streets are as picturesque as they can be. Long may they totter !

Dordrecht is much cut up by canals and rivers. It has three natural waterways. At the fine harbour we watched the unloading of great piles of timber from Germany. The servants, with large flowing bonnets forming an aureole round their faces and covering their backs almost to the waist, were delightful. We found an amusing old dame in a small shop in one of the narrow streets. She sold brass only—new articles, such as form a part of the domestic utensils of every Dutch household, and old ones, often taken in part exchange, which she disposed of at a liberal profit to the credulous stranger. After we had made several visits to her shop, she candidly warned us against the folly of buying old articles, which would so soon wear out. We were obstinate, however, and went on our way rejoicing in the possession of two enormous and much-patched milk-jugs and a charming hand-beaten kettle, with its *test*—that is, a beautifully pierced brass stand made to contain a small earthenware pot full of burning peat, which suffices to keep the water in the kettle near enough the boiling-point to satisfy the Dutch tea-makers; indeed, sometimes they put the teapot with the tea and water in it on the *test*, and let it stew for hours. What the result is I cannot say, as I have always gratefully declined to taste it. In the same way you may see the teapot on the hob in a poor English cottage, and there it seems to remain indefinitely.

On the birth of a child the parents send to all their friends and neighbours little round cakes thickly sprinkled with sugar-coated caraway seeds, which they

call "muisjes." If smooth, these little comfits denote that the new arrival is a girl ; if rough, a boy.

The Dutch have a very "elegant" liqueur for festive occasions. It is called "juffertje in 't groen," or "young lady in green," and consists of a liquid of this hopeful colour, in which float small particles of gold leaf. As far as I could gather, the flavour is not improved by the fact that one is actually drinking gold !

There was a wedding at the hotel where we stayed, and we were hounded out of all the rooms where we sought a moment's peace. The wedding-feast was being prepared all the previous night, and sleep was out of the question. We found afterwards—long afterwards—that at this time some of our friends were at another hotel in the town, the name of which I forget, where the host treated them like prodigal children ; indeed, it is known that he is specially kind to artists, and in consequence possesses quite an interesting collection of pictures presented to him by grateful guests. We wished we had known at the time of this paradise, in which case we too might have been petted instead of being buffeted by the proud and haughty waiters of the hotel which was the scene of the wedding.

Dordrecht owes much of its reputation for beauty to the great James Maris, who has painted it under every aspect ; but while to him may be given the credit of more or less discovering how many exquisite studies it offers for the brush, its praises cannot be exaggerated, as it more than fulfils any expectations one may have formed. A short walk beyond the gates of the city,



and again we found ourselves in the green fields with our backs to the town, and only the extra traffic on the canal told us that we were within a few minutes of that busy though old-fashioned centre ; and here we rested awhile to admire the weather-beaten barges side by side with the brilliantly-painted and more modern vessels, quietly drifting along or tied to the moss-grown, white-tipped posts ; and then, turning our faces to the town, we had an entrancing vision of its beauties, bathed in the warm light of the setting sun—the quaint gables of the houses, the massive square tower of Groote Kerk, and glimpses of masts and shipping, all standing out clearly against the rosy sky.

Those large portions of South Holland which are still under cultivation do not exhibit many varied features of interest. The country is well provided with railways and tramcars, so that there are few of those desirable primitive spots where a stranger is an event and the people are simple in their dress and manners. Failing to find such little oases in this desert of green fields, we were obliged to fall back on the towns, which nearly all have many points of beauty and interest, but are so well known to every traveller that anything I could say would be only repetition. Perhaps the guide-books may tell one as an interesting fact how many bridges there are in Rotterdam ; their name, indeed, is legion, and it always seemed to happen to us that, if we were in a hurry to get to some particular point, every bridge was against us. Most of them are a kind of drawbridge ; but the biggest and most unwieldy of

them open in the middle and rear themselves up to allow of the passage of any small boat whose masts might reach the arch. I believe the owners of all boats pay a small toll for this privilege, for I have noticed that something passes between the bridge-keeper and the captain of the boat. It certainly is exasperating in the race for a train, or perhaps for one's *table d'hôte*, to stand still and watch the bridge slowly swing about to let the boat or boats pass through. The boats always strike one as being as dilatory as possible, and then the bridge swings slowly back, and one rushes feverishly forward to make up for lost time, only, perhaps, to go through the same process at the next bridge. I always longed to be in the boat: the passengers seemed to have so much the best of it, keeping us all waiting while they serenely pursued their way, gazing at the people on the bridge who must perforce await their pleasure. The Dutch accept the position with characteristic imperturbability, which use has indeed made a second nature to them; but it is trying to the patience and temper of one who comes from a country where nothing of the kind is known—except waiting to cross a street in a busy part of London, in which case one is buoyed by the hope that in a minute or two the stalwart policeman will hold up his hand, and one may pass safely through the lines of vehicles, like the Israelites through the Red Sea.

There are other things to be seen in Rotterdam—indeed, a visitor with better luck than ours might insist that the bridges are a minor detail—and even

objects of interest. Everyone knows that Rotterdam is the chief port of Holland ; the deep canals run right through the town, and big sea-going ships pass the very doors of the houses. We explored the quays as much as we were permitted, though we were continually being turned out of the delightful little nooks we took so much pains to discover. We thought of buying some of the big blue butter-pots which come from Cologne, and are bought by the farmers to pack their produce in for export ; but there was such a rapid rise and fall in the prices that we thought it might be wise to get some idea of their value from a person *au courant* with such matters. In one big warehouse a very amiable man, who spoke excellent English, offered to sell us the pots we wanted for twelve guilders apiece, and a little farther on we discovered a salesman who was eager to sell us the same thing at three guilders. As we wanted a good many of them, we eventually decided to write to a friend at Cologne, where we thought they might be bought for two marks apiece.

There are several market-places in the town. I suppose the most important is the Groote markt, where there are always picturesque scenes and groups of costumed peasants. Many of the carts bringing in the country produce are drawn by dogs. These animals guard their masters' property valiantly ; but I fear that in their willingness they are often overworked. One frequently sees big burly peasants who do not scruple to seat themselves on the already heavily-laden cart, to be drawn along by the panting creatures. I

believe there is a society for the protection of animals in Holland, and surely this is an evil loudly crying for interference.

While we were wandering in and out of the innumerable short streets, ever on the look-out for anything specially quaint or beautiful, we met a stately and much-dressed person whom I credited with being a Dutch Mayor in his robes, or at least a municipal dignitary of importance. I gazed at him with curiosity tempered by respect, and when he was out of earshot I questioned Nico as to his standing. Nico looked back indifferently to inform himself of whom I was speaking, and I was indeed disillusioned to hear that he was merely a satellite of the undertaker! He bears the title of "aanspreker," and it is his duty to go from house to house in the neighbourhood of the dwelling of the deceased to announce the death. He is provided by the undertaker; but the sorrowing relations also provide an "aanspreker" to announce the event to their friends and acquaintances. The man we met evidently bore the sad news of the death of a child: hence his extra-decorative apparel. The uniform consisted of knee-breeches and a swallow-tail coat ornamented with thick silver cord and tassels, white gloves, and a three-cornered hat, from which depended long crape streamers fastened with silver rosettes. In small villages all the men at a funeral wear these long streamers, and walk in single file with heads deeply bowed in front of the bier, upon which is placed the pall-covered coffin. The horses attached to the bier

are clothed completely in black velvet, with holes cut for the eyes.

After this rather depressing rencontre we made our way to the beautiful park in which the Rotterdammers love to spend their leisure. It was a glorious evening, and we were in time to enjoy good music before we turned in for the night.

There is in Rotterdam a tower which ends abruptly just above the clock-face : the top of the spire was shot off during one of the many wars.

We ascended the tower of St. Lawrence in order to get a bird's-eye view of town and country. We climbed some 350 steps, and came out on to a roomy landing-place. Rotterdam was at our feet. How tranquilly it seemed to be reposing on its canals ! They reminded one of the veins in a human body, and their green blood gave the city a strange animation. All around us Holland was spread out. The day being very clear, we saw the spires of Delft, and fondly imagined that even the Hague appeared in the distance as a distinct cluster of architecture. On the east we saw the bend which the Maas makes above Rotterdam, and noted the market boats sailing along.

Everywhere we saw rich level country, much water, many mills, bearing signs on all hands of a ruling industry and a ruling human intelligence, which keeps Nature in order, coaxes the rivers to serve its purpose, turns many a penny out of the winds, and holds its own against the imperious sea.

Outside Rotterdam, within easy walking distance, is

the little town of Schiedam. It is one great distillery, with many of the inhabitants engaged in the manufacture of the spirit which takes its name from the place. The liquor is bottled principally in the long narrow earthenware jars which are familiar to everyone—jars which, I remarked, were always put in my bed when I asked for a hot-water bottle. The few farmers around Schiedam buy up the crushed remains of the corn with which to feed their cows and pigs.

From Schiedam we made our way across country to the Hague, where we took up our abode for several weeks in a tiny furnished house, which I boldly undertook to manage with the aid of a dear little maid in a quaint dress, whom I borrowed from a small hotel in Zeeland. Things went on swimmingly after a while, when I had convinced myself that Betje knew a good deal more about Dutch housekeeping than I did, and that it would be as well to leave most things in her honest and capable hands. Besides, this gave me plenty of time to accompany Nico on his painting trips into the country. The Hague itself is the best-known though least typical town in Holland. Its almost unrecognisable Dutch name is 'sGravenhagen—again that mysterious apostrophe before the s. It is almost surrounded by beautiful woods, and is quite the most possible town for an English person to live in. The shops are very good. The people are polite and sufficiently cosmopolitan to forego the terribly embarrassing stare which even the Amsterdamers inflict on every stranger. They have a higher average of good looks and well-made

clothes, and I have even been told that many a self-respecting gentleman of the Hague is dressed by a London tailor. The Court is at the Hague for a great part of the year, and the diplomatic circle and most of the aristocracy reside there. It is not a very large town ; but it is clean, well kept, and pleasant. It possesses several ancient buildings of great interest ; also a splendid collection of pictures, among them being Paul Potter's famous " Bull " and " The Lesson in Anatomy " by Rembrandt.

I used to haunt the fish-market in the hope of meeting the tame storks that wander about at their own sweet will. They are nominally kept by the city ; but they fend for themselves and pick up all manner of tit-bits from the stalls of the friendly fisher-women who come in from Scheveningen bearing baskets of fish on their white-capped heads and wearing brilliant red cloaks.

Not content with these brief glimpses of a charming people, we visited them in their native village, which is also the most fashionable watering-place in Holland. The name itself is one which has proved perilous to people possessed of normal throats and a determination to pronounce it correctly. As Nico pronounces it, one would swear that the name was spelt with several *r*'s, and the description of it as the most painful name in Holland is generally recognisable even by the Dutch, who thoroughly enjoy the efforts of the stranger to speak it correctly. We often packed a luncheon-basket, and, leaving Betje in charge of the house, took


tram through the beautifully-wooded country to Scheveningen. The fisher-folk live quite apart from the fashionable people who stay in the little place during the summer months. The villas and hotels are built on the dunes, and as near as possible to the sea. Behind all this alien grandeur lies the village of the natives themselves. It is composed of little low-built houses, with an occasional tiny gable which is quite entrancing. At night a watchman on horseback keeps a look-out for the boats in the North Sea. There is no harbour, and when the boats come in the watchman sounds a trumpet, which fetches the folk out of their beds, for the boats must be drawn up on the sand for safety by horses, and it requires experienced men to harness them to the boats. When a boat is in need of repairs, it is dragged to the wharves by as many as ten strong horses, pulling their mightiest ; and then, when it is once more seaworthy, what pleasanter sight than to see it slide slowly into the water, shake itself as if to be rid of the pollution of the land, and, spreading its sails to catch the breeze, float off in serene strength?

On stormy nights in winter the shore is crowded with wives and mothers and sweethearts, watching anxiously for their men's return, for North Sea fishing is fraught with danger, and many sad losses are mourned in the humble little village hiding behind the smart façade which Scheveningen presents to the visitor. The men are clad in woollen jerseys of blue or bright red, and they pull their thick worsted stockings over their trousers up to the knee. Under the enveloping cloaks

of vermilion the women wear thick shawls crossed over their bosoms, and often hide their neat caps under a large and rather becoming straw hat lined with closely-gathered cotton or silk stuff. The children, in their doll-like costumes, are as dainty as it is possible to imagine.


After a day thus pleasantly spent, we go back by the last tram to our tiny house, to find our faithful Betje enjoying a late flirtation with a bearded policeman—at least, I suspect as much from her vivid blushes, although she says they were but discussing the inconvenient hours and arduous duties of a guardian of the peace in this well-behaved city of the Hague. Every morning, while we were still sleeping, Betje went out to do her marketing for the day, and it is wonderful how well this arrangement answered. The money she spent in a week I had been wont to fritter away in a day when I did the buying myself; yet her purchases were always desirable. She never accepted any but the freshest of vegetables, the tenderest of meat, and the choicest of fish, butter, and eggs; whilst I had had foisted on my inexperience high-priced margarine and vegetables neglected by more knowing housekeepers. Betje was very sharp, very pretty, and gifted with wonderful powers of repartee; and I have no doubt she utilized all these natural gifts to the full when she did her daily shopping.

Once we took the train to Delft *en troisième*, on purpose to enjoy the sight and conversation of a comely Scheveningen woman who was taking her little girl to see her big sister in service in Delft. She told us with pride



that this girl of eighteen was earning half a crown a week as maid of all work to a doctor and his wife and family. Of this rather small emolument the mother received a gulden a week, allowing her daughter a modest tenpence a week pocket-money. Out of this she had to provide her caps and the wooden shoes which Dutch servants always wear during their cleaning operations, which require a great deal of splashing and the use of many buckets of water. When this part of their housework is over they go about noiselessly in stockinged feet. I think I may safely say that they wear more than one pair of stockings.


Delft is a restful town—one might say a sleepy town—and has for centuries been the centre of those pottery works which produce the famous Delft ware, the ancient examples of which are highly prized by the connoisseur, and by no one more than the Dutch themselves. In olden days it was used for every ordinary purpose ; but now even the poorest peasant will carefully treasure a bit of old Delft if he happens to possess it. They do not always discriminate, and will often show one worthless bits of earthenware, for which, they will say, they have been offered large sums of money. As long as they have no wish to sell their treasures, let them remain happy : I for one would not enlighten them, and thus deprive them of the pleasure of gloating over their cherished crocks. Nowadays one does not see the potter at work with his lump of soft clay and his quickly-revolving table : all the ware is made in large manufactories with the aid of modern machinery.



In common with every other ancient Dutch town, Delft has its old church and its medieval gateways. The atmosphere of the place, which is peculiarly soothing, seems to enfold these buildings with a charm which is all their own. In the market-place there is a second church, called the New Church (to distinguish it from the first-named, which is called the Old Church); but, as the New Church dates from early in the fourteenth century, the name is something of a paradox. In the Old Church one finds the tomb of Van Tromp, a very imposing structure of marble. It strikes one as inconsistent that the Dutch, who so rigorously exclude all decoration from their churches, built their famous Admiral such an ornamental monument. The brave Englishman who conquered him has, alas! found a most undignified resting-place.

In the New Church is the tomb of William the Silent. He sleeps his last sleep not many yards from the spot where he fell beneath the hand of the assassin. He was the grandfather of our William III. Delft is the burial-place of all Dutch royalty.

The people of the town are a placid folk, who do not interest themselves in the presence of a stranger. Nico sketched here without any larger audience than a policeman and a boy of six, who begged for and was given a cigar by my good-natured husband. A tall man came along and stopped to watch the progress of the picture. The boy addressed him as "father," and I was trembling for the storm about to burst over our devoted heads; but the father apparently took the long cigar in his boy's



mouth quite as a matter of course, and even sanctioned it to the extent of lighting his own from the glowing end which his son held out to him. He agreed with the policeman that Nico's drawing was not bad; but, for his part, he would have made several alterations in the natural aspect of things. For example, why paint gray cloud when blue sky was so much prettier? Why paint the weeds growing between the bricks when, as a matter of fact, they ought not to be there? Then, the figure of a smartly dressed girl would greatly improve the picture. I was not surprised to learn on inquiry that he had a daughter. He promised she should come if Nico would wish to include her in his sketch. Nico assured him that there was nothing he would like better, but to-day, unfortunately, we were obliged to hurry back to the Hague to keep an appointment with some friends. Thus were we driven from Delft by Nico's delicate consideration for a parent's feelings; and since that day we have never again visited the town, fearful lest we might again meet the fond father, in which case Nico's feelings would have been too much for him, and he would certainly have felt obliged to transfer the smart one's charms to canvas.

There is a church at Katwyk that is whitewashed outside as well as in. It has a bleak appearance in winter; but when the warm sunlight of summer is pouring down on the red roof, and the grass is of emerald green, and near it on the strand are the fishing-boats with their dark sails, it presents a unique and

strangely-pleasing picture. The whole place is in keeping, for Katwyk is one of the quaintest of fishing-villages on the North Sea. It is not far from the Hague, and the tram from Leyden takes the visitor within easy walking distance of the spot. It is a favourite haunt of artists, and is well provided with lodgings and inns. The air is delicious, and the breeze coming across the dunes had an exhilarating effect upon us when we reached the little place, rather bored with our residence in a civilized town. Fortunately, we arrived at rather a slack time, and the man and wife who kept the small inn to which we went did everything in their power to make the place attractive to us.

The beach upon which the boats were always drawn up in fine weather teemed with subjects for Nico's brush, and there were plenty of willing and picturesque models to be found among the poorer members of the community. From the first day a boy of about four or five attached himself to us, and made quite intelligent remarks about the pictures. Nico allowed him to carry some small portion of his impedimenta, much to the child's delight ; and he proved a most useful aid, always ready to run errands, to fetch fresh water, and even to wash a paint-box under my careful supervision. One day I gave him a pencil and a drawing-block, and he sat down very gravely and made wonderfully good attempts at producing the surrounding objects. We did not ask the reason of his apparent exemption from school duties : I had strong suspicions that part of the


time at least he was playing truant. He was fatherless, sisterless, and brotherless, and lived with his mother in a room rented from one of the fisher-folk. The poor woman earned a scanty living by making and mending fishing-nets, and had neither time nor inclination to examine too closely into the way her little son spent his days. I think Nico would have loved to take him all over the country with us, and I dare say the mother would have had no objection to the plan; but the responsibility was greater than I cared to undertake: so we left the little chap with a bundle of coloured pencils, a small paint-box, and heaps of paper, and perhaps one day in the dim future we may hear of him as a newly-discovered genius, if he fulfil his very early promise.

The costume of Katwyk-on-Sea is similar to that worn by the people of Scheveningen. The fishermen, who have no harbour for their boats, are obliged in bad weather to put into Ijmuiden, on the North Holland coast, some ten miles north of Haarlem.

Before we left Katwyk the summer visitors began to pour into the little place. Our landlord and his wife, instead of treating us with their former flattering servility, adopted a manner which would have been more reasonable, though equally inhospitable, if we had been living entirely on their bounty instead of paying liberally for our simple fare. They informed us that the prices hitherto charged would be more than doubled. Sorry as we were to leave this charming spot, our natural indignation prevailed. We shook

the dust of Katwyk from our feet, and set out for fresh fields and pastures new.

With my usual recklessness, I undertook to ignore the tram and to walk with Nico the nine or ten miles which lay between us and Leyden, and to send our luggage on by the steam-tram to the hotel we had fixed upon. We neither of us have much confidence in my powers as a walker: so we started off very early in the morning of the day following our final and complete disillusionment about our landlord. We tramped along valiantly for the first two or three miles, and then I suggested that it would be well if Nico made some sketches while I had a little rest. When he was ready to start again I felt not the least inclined to resume my walk: so we decided to have our luncheon, although, judged by the hour, it would have been more fittingly called breakfast. Thus fortified, we again started on our walk to Leyden. We walked and we walked; the road was rather bad, and we were far from sure that we were on the right track. The country was lonely, although there were farms dotted about in the distance. A few cows were the only living things to be seen. I began to lag again, when we turned a corner and saw coming towards us a man and a dog. We asked him how far we were from Leyden. He seemed to have a fiendish delight in telling us that we were walking away from the town, but that we were not more than five miles out of our way; then, whistling to his dog, he resumed his walk, without telling us which road we should take, or even giving



a word of sympathy. We were too much overwhelmed by the news to call him back. In a state bordering on despair, we sat down by the roadside. We must have walked nine miles that morning, and I felt that I could walk no more. To make matters worse, at this stage in our adventure it began to rain. The early morning had been gloriously fine ; but now the sky became dark and lowering, portending hours of steady rain. We were not even provided with umbrellas.

We hailed with melancholy joy the approach of a woman in a small dog-cart (I mean a cart drawn by dogs), and eagerly asked her the name of the nearest village. To our dismay, she told us that we were about two kilometres from Katwyk. Tired, wet, and miserable as we were, we endeavoured to meet this unwelcome intelligence with composure, and with a curious look at us the woman went on her way. We rose from our grassy seat, straightened our stiffened limbs, and once more started on our tramp, this time back to Katwyk. *We* hurried along as best *I* could across the stretch of land intervening between us and the tramway, and endeavoured to possess our hungry souls and weary bodies in patience until we should reach the tram, and by its friendly aid be deposited in Leyden. We arrived very late in the afternoon, and, almost starving, dragged ourselves to the hotel, where we found our baggage and a friendly welcome. It was a pleasant hotel, or at least we thought so ; and the joy of a warm bath, fresh clothes, and a hot, comfortable, well-cooked meal ! All's well that ends well.

By the time we had satisfied our hunger and thoroughly relished our dinner, we began to think with equanimity of our adventure, and to see the humorous side of it all. We did not betray our secret to the hotel people. They were really pleased at our fine appetites and the compliments we showered on the food.

Walking through the quiet streets of this peaceful town, one gazes with eager interest at the few wayfarers. It is possible that the ancestors of these folk were the heroes and heroines of the thrilling accounts which history gives of old Leyden. In the terrible days of siege, rats and dogs and even mouldy straw were eaten by the famine-stricken people. At last, when further endurance seemed impossible, the burghers implored the Burgomaster, for the sake of their starving wives and children, to yield the keys of the town to the besiegers. His answer was to present his drawn sword to their leader. Throwing wide his arms, "Kill me first," said he, "and then deliver up your town to the enemy." The example of his undaunted courage awoke an answering spirit in the bosoms of the brave burghers, who determined that, come what might, they would stand by their valiant chief, and if need be endure starving and death. History relates that just at this terrible crisis the Prince of Orange relieved them, and much-needed provisions were brought into the famished town. It was after this memorable event that Leyden became the great centre of learning for the whole of Europe. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it remained unrivalled, and even

now it preserves an excellent reputation as a University town.

The town-hall is a delightful bit of architecture approached by a double flight of steps. There are in the town numberless bridges which connect the many little islands upon which Leyden is built. I have very pleasant memories of the town as a place that was soothing to the frame of mind in which I visited it, and also as the dwelling-place of a charming old lady, who wore a crinoline and long ringlets, and spent all her time knitting hideously bright wool mats and antimacassars. She had piled all these obnoxious articles in a vast oaken chest, in expectation, she coyly informed me, of her marriage and consequent migration to a mansion in the South of France. She was a French lady, slightly deficient mentally, but still very sweet and interesting. She lived in seclusion with one faithful old servant, who had overcome the difficulty of the Dutch tongue, and had given up her life to the care of her mistress. It was by the merest chance that I became acquainted with this interesting and very exclusive couple. One day I lost my way in the old town. Indeed, it was a habit of mine to do so; but usually I had very little difficulty in retracing my steps and finding my way to the hotel or any rendezvous I had made with Nico. On this occasion I was unfortunate in not meeting with anyone who would take the trouble to understand my broken Dutch, and in desperation I knocked at the most sympathetic door that met my anguished glance. By some strange

intuition I spoke in French to the charming old lady, who herself answered my knock, and with great kindness and dignity she begged me to enter, and to await the return of her servant, who would then accompany me to where I wished to go. I was delighted to avail myself of her kind offer, and we chatted pleasantly for a few minutes. Then the elderly serving-maid came bustling in, evidently amazed to find her mistress conversing affably with a stranger. They would not allow me to leave the house without taking a glass of wine. Afterwards the maid conducted me to the hotel, and on the way told me parts of her mistress's history. At their request, I visited them several times, and, inspired by the tender respect which Marie showed to her mistress, I wove a romance about the dear old lady in which she figured as a noble exile from her native land, whose reason had become unhinged by some love disappointment in her youth. I never learnt her name. "Mademoiselle" was sufficient title, and I felt that it would be bad taste on my part to question the faithful Marie as to details which she did not voluntarily offer to my sympathy.





**A PEASANT BOY OF VEERE
ON SKATES**

As soon as they can walk the little Hollanders are encouraged to skate, and children of four or five years are adepts in the art.

the march of civilization. Among the caps I may mention the favourite gold helmet of the Frisians and the modified silver bands which are native to the province of Gelderland. These bands, which are worn over a tight black cap, consist of a circlet of plain silver, about two inches wide, which fits tightly round the skull and culminates at each ear in a little silver corkscrew. This band is in its turn covered by a white muslin cap, or sometimes by a cap embroidered in colour.

I must say that we found the farmers' wives kindly and hospitable. Often, when we were walking, we would go to a farmhouse and ask for a glass of milk, and this not always because we were thirsty, but often because we were eager to behold the interior of some fascinating dwelling. In nearly every case we were cordially invited to enter, and on no occasion were we permitted to pay for our drink. There were generally little ones playing about, who did not refuse some small coins ; but this was *sub rosa*, and did not at all minimize their mothers' ready courtesy.

One old lady with whom we struck up an acquaintance in this way had staying with her a dear little grand-daughter on a visit from Marken. Her parents were small shopkeepers on the island. Her father, a Marken man, had met her mother from this tiny Utrecht village on a never-to-be-forgotten visit to Amsterdam during the kermis—a feast no longer permitted by the town authorities. The old lady related the story of their courtship with gusto. Her daughter


was her only child, and she evidently thought it a remarkable event that the girl should have married a man who lived so far from her native spot. As a matter of fact, it is a rare thing for a Marken man to seek a bride away from his own island. The old lady related to us a visit she had paid to her daughter, and her impressions of Marken were most amusing. The little grandchild seemed strangely out of place in her present surroundings, and I think her granny would have dearly loved to strip off her brightly-coloured, strangely-shaped garments and dress her more in accordance with the views of critical neighbours ; but the child's father, after his one step from the paths of convention, returned to his narrow groove more conservative than before. Had her granny attempted to alter her dress, the child would have been withdrawn and her visit brought to an abrupt conclusion. At this farm we were shown all the stables, the clean bright dairy, polished brass, household treasures, and heirlooms, much as I have described elsewhere. Quainter and prettier than anything else was the picture formed by the comely grandmother and the daintly little girl who nestled up to her so affectionately.

The town of Utrecht is medieval and suggestive of repose. Luckily, the inhabitants carried their stolid indifference to an extent that spelt for us comparative immunity from the gaping crowds to whose bold stare we were by this time more or less habituated.

This old town has a peculiarity which is, I think, unique. The canals are quite a considerable depth

below the roadways, and to reach their borders one descends flights of steps. On this level one finds arched vaults or cellars, which form a solid and dry foundation for the important houses in the street above. These vaults are, I think, for the most part used as storehouses ; but some few are inhabited by poor folk, not very particular where they pitch their tents. The Dom, as the principal church is called, was the largest and most beautiful cathedral in Holland until it was partly destroyed by a terrible storm which wrecked much of the building and separated the church from its towers. The inhabitants are content to leave it in a dismantled condition. This town has a University ; but, from various tales I have heard and read, I gather that the students are more interested in their amusements than in attending lectures. They live in lodgings, and seem to be allowed absolute liberty as to how they spend their time and how much of it they should devote to the studies necessary for their prospective professions.

In this province we came across a very delightful fishing-village, Spakenburg. It is actually about a mile from the Zuyder Zee, with which it is connected by a canal. The small brightly-painted houses remind one of Volendam. The costume also possesses many points of similarity. The bodice of the dress is made with short sleeves finished off at the elbow by a broad cuff of coloured print ; the brilliant print yoke is attached to the bodice, just passing over the shoulder and fastening under the arm. The tiny children wear tight-



fitting crocheted caps ; those a little older, funny little black bonnets edged with fur, regardlessly of the changing seasons. The elder girls and women wear the white caps with crimped lace borders that I knew of old in Volendam ; but the corners, instead of being stretched out in wing-like curves from the cheeks, are pleated closely enough to insure their fitting demurely to the contour of the face. The delicate goffering needed for this purpose is accomplished by means of a warm knife-blade, and is a knack gained only by much practice and much patience. We were rather lucky as to our reception in this place. The chief fisherman, who held some official position in the harbour, was celebrating his silver wedding on the day of our arrival, and we met him, surrounded by his friends, during our first wanderings through the village. In the joy of his heart, doubtless increased by sundry drinks of schiedam or curaoa, he stopped us and invited Nico to quaff his health. For policy's sake, Nico accepted the invitation, and in his turn " stood treat " all round, I inviting myself, and looking as pleasant as possible over a bottle of aerated canal water flavoured with acid drops. Our complaisance was well rewarded by an invitation to assist at the feast to be held that evening in the largest room of the small hotel where we happened to be staying.

The happy moment having arrived, we entered the banqueting-hall amidst an embarrassing silence, which, combined with the fact that we were the cynosure of all eyes, covered me with confusion. Nico was honoured

with a seat near his host, and goodness knows where I should have been relegated to had he not appealed to our friend that I might occupy the seat next to him. He artfully remarked that, as I did not understand Dutch without him for an interpreter, I should be deprived of the privilege of realizing all the eloquent speeches of the company. The room was gaily decorated with flags and garlands of artificial flowers. The long, narrow table bore such light refreshments as sponge fingers, mixed biscuits, gingerbread, and a light yellow wine in decanters. The lady who was partly responsible for the occasion sat at the head of the table by her husband's side, very hot and confused at finding herself in such an honourable and conspicuous position. All the same, she beamed with pleasure, and was, I am sure, delighted with the effect of the stiff new clothes and immaculate cap donned for the occasion. To start the evening, we all sipped a small glass of the sherry which graced the festive board; in this we drank the health of the pair, with appropriate glances and good wishes. We were all very quiet and dignified at this early stage of the proceedings, and conversation limited itself to fishing prospects and mild politics; but soon large glasses of beer were placed before the guests, tossed off, and repeated with startling rapidity. Tongues were loosened, cigars and pipes were lighted, and the excitement increased with the heat of the atmosphere. We were provided with all sorts of entertainment. The children of the old people went through the performance of a play of sorts; songs were sung, both sentimental

BABY IN CHAIR

A RATHER charming seat on wheels. The little pot underneath is filled with burning peat to keep baby's feet warm.

When the good folk—most of them “of a certain age,” and all of them bulky—started to dance, I thought that the fitting moment for our departure had arrived. We excused ourselves on the plea of fatigue, and with real reluctance our hosts permitted us to retire—but not to sleep. They kept up the orgie till four or five in the morning, and we still took part in it as weary and unwilling listeners. The next day we met many of our fellow-guests on the dyke, apparently none the worse for their prolonged carouse; they seemed pleased to see us again, and cordially invited us to drink coffee with them in their cottages and to paint their children. So it came about that in a day or two we were hail-fellow-well-met with every soul in the place, including the blind town-crier, a person of much dignity and reticence. His dog, a surly brute as a rule, was kind enough to approve me, and this decided his master to treat us with urbanity. I lost a little brooch while staying in this place; and this worthy went round, with his dog and bell, proclaiming my misfortune. I received much sympathy, and Nico was largely interviewed on the subject; but, sad to tell, I never found my brooch.

We walked from Spakenburg to a village a mile farther inland; perhaps the few scattered farmhouses hardly merit the title of village. Through the clean, polished windows of one of the houses I thought I espied a beautiful bit of rare old Delft. Making use of our usual excuse, we knocked at the door and asked if we might have a glass of milk. The lady who

came to the door in response to our knock threw it hospitably open and bade us "com ben." We entered gladly, and found ourselves in a large bright room. The walls were partly tiled with squares of ancient blue-and-white, and where this decoration ceased the plaster was concealed beneath a coat of whitewash. In the middle of the room was a large wooden platform, raised some few inches from the floor, and on this, round a table, were seated eight or nine of the finest and best-looking Dutch women it has ever been my lot to see. Two of them were matrons, still very comely; the others were quite young girls. They were all sewing at some kind of patchwork. We had evidently struck the Dutch equivalent for a sewing-bee. I fear that we rather upset them, for one by one the party dwindled away until we were left with the two elderly women and the pleasant person who had invited us to enter. The latter gave us milk, for which we paid as liberally as she would allow us; and then, remembering the primary purpose of our visit, we casually approached the handsome old bureau on which was perched the object of our desire. I took it in my hands and examined it closely: it was full of sand—I suppose to preserve its balance. It was a very good specimen of its kind, although not quite the *rara avis* I had imagined. One of the ladies gave us a long history of its pedigree, it having been in the same family for centuries; and I realized that there was no hope of a bargain. We inquired rather diffidently if they would sell it, and, much to our surprise, we were answered in the affirma-

tive; but the price asked we considered quite exorbitant. We made our modest offer, which was rejected with scorn. The vase was placed on the sewing-table, no doubt to tempt us to increase our bid; and we were persuaded to rest a little longer. Erelong the girls, whom we had apparently frightened away, returned, having in the meantime, after the manner of girls, taken the opportunity to titivate themselves. I was particularly impressed with the enormous silver buckles which, curving with the strap, entirely covered the instep of their heavy leather shoes.

Nico made a sketch of the group as they stood round us, and some time afterwards we rose to bid them all good-bye, with much hand-shaking and mutual good wishes, not to mention a tentative nudge and glance in the direction of the Delft pot. We were adamant. As we stood at the door saying a last good-bye, crash went the precious vase! One of the girls had knocked against the table, and there was the much-prized and coveted object lying in many fragments on the brick floor!

I admit that they had some excuse in fixing the blame on us: it was true that but for our presence the vase would still have been adorning the bureau in a safe position. We felt horribly guilty, and made what reparation we could by purchasing the broken bits for the price we had offered for the perfect piece. This softened them, and we went off rather disconsolately with the bits of earthenware tied up in Nico's pocket-handkerchief. These were actually brought to England,

and a kind and very patient friend built them up for us with the aid of seccotine.

Laren is not in Utrecht. The province of North Holland, rich in charming and curious corners, contains the dear little village. On this occasion North Holland shall be robbed, and Laren shall come under the heading of Utrecht. The village is situated in the midst of a most beautiful country: rich waving cornfields and flower-bedecked pastures nestle in the shelter of the verdure-clad dunes in the heart of which Laren is built. Here again we found the people faithful to their ancient dress. It is a costume of peculiar simplicity, with a severe white cap framing the face.

Most of the housewives spin their own linen from the flax which grows abundantly in the neighbourhood. They use simple and primitive spinning-wheels. Their costume adds to the old-world illusion, and while watching a Laren woman spinning, seated before her rude wheel in the midst of her quaint interior, you do not easily realize that within a few miles are all the bustle and the rush of the twentieth century.

In Laren the houses are large and airy, and the cowsheds adjoining are brilliantly bright and clean. The cows that live indoors during the bad weather eat their food from mangers lined with red and green tiles brightly glazed. They wear quite an elegant garment, which is tied round their knees with tapes. The North Holland cow is supercilious, eaten up with her own conceit. Through the door in the cowshed we enter the *huiskamer*, as in all Dutch farmhouses.

The houses are bright, clean, and lofty ; the builders or architects of Laren are more generous with windows than those of other Dutch peasant houses. The fireplaces, high and spacious, are often tiled. Quite large pictures are formed by placing ten or twenty tiles together, each with its portion of the design. The pictures thus composed are carefully placed in a background of white tiles, which shows them up admirably. The cupboard beds in this village have an advantage of ventilation over those in other parts. The bed and its coverings are laid on a sort of shelf which, while exactly fitting the recess and presenting the conventional appearance, has attached to it two handles of rope, by which the whole affair can be pulled out without much trouble when the housewife considers an airing necessary. During the daytime dainty curtains are drawn across the recess, concealing the fact that the one room serves alike for parlour, refectory, and dormitory.

This place is beloved of artists, and is a favourite spot for holiday-makers from the neighbouring towns, who flock to the village in the summer, taking up their quarters at the hotels which have been built for their accommodation on the dunes. The shady woods, sweetly scented with many flowers, are a delightful refuge for those who desire solitude. The village people retain their simplicity, unspoilt by these incursions from the outside world.

Laren is Catholic, and has the distinction of being the only spot in Holland where a public procession headed by the clergy in full canonicals is allowed yearly

RELIGIOUS PROCESSION—I.

THIS and the following plate represent a procession which takes place every year in the autumn. The devout Volendamers make a pilgrimage to the village of Kevelaar in Germany. They return in procession, walking from Edam, and break up in the little Volendam church.

we may take a final farewell of the traditional customs and costumes of the fishing-villages which border the Zuyder Zee. There is an important question to be considered : What would become of the thousands of people engaged in the fishing industry, who are unfit for any other labour?

My grandfather was living in Holland at the time when a large part of the country surrounding Haarlem was reclaimed from the water at an enormous expense. This land is to-day covered with fertile fields and remunerative bulb nurseries; but he remembers that hundreds of people were stricken down with fever caused by the vapours rising from the acres of mud thus exposed.

Limburg, in the south-east corner of Holland, is a province which is obviously intended by Nature to belong to Belgium or to Germany. It stretches its hand right outside the boundaries of Holland, and its physical construction is much at variance with the character of the country to which it belongs politically. It has been called the garden of Holland; but we think it should be considered to have more right to that title than so many other delightfully fertile spots which we did not discover during our short and uneventful visit to the province.

In the south the country is hilly and very beautiful. In the environs of the capital, Maastricht, there is an extraordinary series of excavations in the soft sandstone. They cover a considerable area, and a gruesome collection of human skulls and bones tells a melancholy

tale of the fate of many adventurous spirits who lost their way, and finally their lives, in this subterranean labyrinth. They are very ancient, and were much used as hiding-places during the great wars which ravaged Holland in the earlier days of its history. In this province is manufactured most of the china used in Holland.

The farmhouses are large rambling buildings in which stables, cow-houses, and dwellings are roofed under one velvety thatch. We met with nothing much in the way of costume beyond the simple white Flemish caps.

The people speak a dialect which is more than half German. In describing this long, narrow province my pen lags, for, apart from the delightful scenery, there is very little to be found to interest the stranger in search of quaint incidents and local colour.

CHAPTER V

GELDERLAND

AT the ideal village of Elspeet we were delighted to notice that our hostess wore the befrilled cap of certain parts of Gelderland. We had driven over from Nunspeet, another charming village: I dare say it calls itself a town, as it has several streets and two hotels. We hired our carriage from a garrulous old man, who told us that he would provide us with a turnout as grand as the Queen's own carriage. When it appeared, it certainly was a gorgeous affair, although not exceedingly comfortable. It consisted of two seats upholstered in pink brocade, our feet resting on the same sumptuous material. That was all. It had no sides, no back, no front! I forget how the coachman's seat was connected; but I remember feeling as though we were on a small island, and that the slightest false movement might precipitate us into the unknown.

The day was fine. The road to Elspeet lay for the first few miles through pine-woods, the aromatic fragrance of which scented the fresh westerly breeze. The scenery was quite different from anything I had thitherto come across. There were no dykes, no canals, no

windmills. After passing through the pine-woods, the wide moorland stretched out before us on either side. It was very lovely, full of the most admirable effects of soft colour. The heather, although not in bloom, had a purplish tint, and the mosses and turf still wore their dull winter coat; but here and there in marshy spots were patches of most vividly fresh young green, of reeds and grass; and these emphasized the low tones of the landscape. Far away on the moor was a flock of sheep, the figure of the shepherd with his long staff standing silhouetted against the clear gray sky; he shaded his eyes to get a better view of us as we drove past. It was no surprise in this primitive land to meet a load of heather drawn by a black-and-white ox. The few houses we passed were thatched.

When we arrived at the village I knew that I should love it. I think it was the cap I mentioned before that gave me such a good impression. We did not stay at the hotel. The charming person in the cap had rooms to let, and would "board" us; and the rooms looked and smelt so fresh and sweet that we decided it would be a pleasant change after living for months in small country inns redolent of stale cigars and beer.

As I alighted from the carriage a pretty girl wearing the red neckerchief and tight black cap peculiar to the children of Elspeet ran up and gave me a big bunch of sweet-scented lilac. I was delighted when she refused the cents I offered her, buried my face in the fragrant spring flowers, and reflected on the charm of a spontaneous and gracious act.

As far as a stranger can judge, these Elspeetians are a simple folk, although I have heard it hinted that among themselves they are very vindictive. By reflection does not this make for peace? "Those who live in thatched houses should not make enemies," said the farmer who is unfortunate enough to make an enemy is lucky if his home is not destroyed by a fire which is *not* the result of an accident. The steadings are all well insured, and when a house is much in need of repairs there are uncharitable people who attribute the frequent fires to reasons other than the vengeful.

As it happened, we soon witnessed this familiar event in Elspeet life. In the middle of our first night in the place I was rudely awakened from pleasant dreams by being violently dragged out of bed. The room was brilliantly illumined, and at first it puzzled my sleepy brain to guess where the light came from. Nico soon informed me. A farm opposite, only a few yards distant, was blazing away as only dry thatch can blaze. In the field in front of us were the inhabitants of the farm, endeavouring to dress themselves in a few casual garments they had snatched up in their hurried flight. I noticed, however, that the feminine part of the crowd had not omitted to don their caps. Unfortunately, the fire started in the barn, and the poor cows were burnt to death almost before the disaster was discovered. In a few minutes the whole village had turned out to watch the blaze. There was nothing to be done, for, although these fires occur so often, and there is such an abuse

CHILDREN OF ELSPEET

THE small boys and girls of the village are dressed identically, with the exception of the bonnet, where a slight difference is visible.

Here they sleep in beds made in cupboard-like recesses in the wall. When the family overflows the sleeping accommodation of this room, as is often the case, there are one or two bed-holes available in the cowshed. The third part of the building is generally let to a lodger. The interiors differ very little from those in other parts of Holland, excepting that here, instead of a floor of planks or matting, there is a cold but very paintable pavement of rough and broken varicoloured bricks. A few of the families still possess some fine old pieces of furniture and choice bits of Delft, of the value of which to foreigners they have quite an exaggerated idea. They themselves would prefer to spend the money they might sell them for on brand-new hideous furniture of deal or pine.

The people believe firmly in spells and witches. Certain of them are credited with power to cure (immediately) a broken limb by the recital of incantations accompanied by appropriate gestures. They will tell you that a prick from a needle which has been used for sewing a shroud is a cure for toothache.

The lot of the farmers in these parts is very different from that of those who possess the juicy pastureland of North Holland. Here the few patches of grass are treasured for the small crop of hay, which is carefully preserved for the winter months. The cows, when they are fortunate enough to get an airing, are led out one at a time by a piece of rope tied to the horns, and are allowed to graze on the small patches of grass to be found on the moors. It is the children who per-

form this duty, and a gentle black-and-white cow led by a charming little guardian with a tightly-fitting black cap, closely framing the rosy face, is an enticing subject for the brush.

Sheep manage to thrive on this ungenerous soil. They are driven far out on the moors every morning, and are brought back to the fold in the evening. They have fine heads and expressive faces covered with skin that gleams like satin, and denuded of the little tuft of wool over the nose which gives such an idiotic look to our sheep in England. In the dark folds where they pass the night their eyes give out wonderful opalescent flames. In Elspeet I was never tired of watching them.

An English lady has taken up her abode in one of the most charming farms of this pretty village. She inhabits the third part of the house, which is so often let. Here she has arranged for herself a picturesque Dutch interior, much to the amazement of the natives, who wonder that a lady who could evidently afford to provide herself with real luxuries in Amsterdam, such as carpets, heavily-framed mirrors, and even bouquets of waxen flowers carefully arranged under a glass shade, should be satisfied with the old blue-and-white tiles, open hearth, and simple furniture, which are the best they can provide for her. The family are devoted to her. She is a good friend to them, and, indeed, to all the villagers, who come to her with their accidents and ailments, with a touching faith in her capacity to cure them. At least, they can be sure she will alleviate their

pains with a comforting draught or a deftly-arranged bandage. She has inexhaustible sympathy, which she freely extends to all. She has made herself a garden of English flowers, and it is really wonderful how everything flourishes with her in this barren little corner of Holland, which does not even produce enough grass to feed its cattle. During our stay at Elspeet she showed us much kindness. It was indeed a treat to me to have a good talk in my mother-tongue. She introduced us to various quaint village homes, to say nothing of lending to Nico a most delightful work-place, which, by introducing a window into the thatched roof, she has transformed from a little old cottage into a really perfect studio. Apart from the necessary light and cleanliness, she has left it just as she found it on the death of its former tenants, an old peasant and his wife, whose ghosts, according to the villagers, still haunt the place. As there are always sweetmeats to be found in this good fairy's cupboard, there is no difficulty in persuading little models to pose in her studio, where also one always finds just the background required. The people, affectionate and simple, work out their uneventful lives, tending their mild-eyed cattle and their herds of satin-faced sheep, with little or no thought of the great, restless, vivid world outside their own quiet village.

In Nunspeet and Elspeet is worn the tight cap over a silver band; but in the former place the cap is decorated with coloured designs, while the Elspeetians content themselves with white muslin.

A GIRL OF ELSPEET

the platform. I am not drawing on my imagination : this woful experience has fallen to my lot twice.

While I am on the debatable subject of foreign railway service, I am proud to say that I believe that I can give a solution of the extraordinary and apparently unnecessary amount of punching that a passenger's ticket undergoes on the shortest journey. I have always longed to know why at every station where the train makes a halt endless rows of officials demand a sight of one's ticket, and add their quota of mutilation. At Nymegen, when the fifth official opened the door of our carriage with the usual request, I persuaded Nico to ask the reason. The man looked at the clock, and, with a rather apologetic shrug of his shoulders answered, "Well, you see, there is still a minute before the train starts, and I may as well do a bit of snipping."

It was spring when I travelled through Gelderland, and I think it must have been an unusually wet time. Everywhere the land was flooded, and on each side of us stretched sheets of almost stagnant water. The topmost branches of the submerged trees were the only signs that one was passing through land, and not a trackless sea. Occasionally we caught glimpses of desolate-looking farms rising out of the water. The swamp extended for miles and miles. Indeed, in the highest and most-favoured lands the water was still as deep as the stalks of the dandelions, which appeared to float on the surface in patches of brilliant yellow. This was a grass country, where the farmers count on

pasturing their large herds of cattle from the first spring month. I fear such floods must be distasteful.

We met rather a quaint person in a small hotel at which we stayed while at Arnheim. We were breakfasting, and a Dutch breakfast is a very different thing from the coffee and rolls which only provoke the fine appetite of the average Englishman in most countries across the Channel. Here all the guests of the hotel sat at a long table, covered with dishes containing every variety of cold meat and sausage, several kinds of bread and cake, and abundance of eggs. Opposite to us was an old man, evidently a well-to-do farmer fresh from the country. He got through such quantities of ham, "rosbif," sausage-rolls, and gingerbread that I felt quite anxious about him. The eggs he left severely alone. All the other guests had left the table; but we sat on, dividing our attention between the small items of interest to be seen through the window and the remarkable gastronomical performance of our *vis-à-vis*. By-and-by he opened a conversation with Nico anent the honey he was eating, comparing it unfavourably with that produced by his own bees on his farm near Nijkerk. Ere long he turned his attention to the dish of eggs. He proceeded to peel one, fortunately hard-boiled, and, cutting it in two, sprinkled it freely with salt and put it whole into his mouth. "This," said he, "is the way we eat eggs in Gelderland;" and forthwith he prepared and ate five more consecutively. I heard afterwards that it is a custom in some parts to have egg-eating competitions at

Easter. If our friend the farmer was an average eater, one wonders how many would be swallowed by the winner?

The farmer, who was a kind old soul, begged us to visit him if we ever found ourselves in the neighbourhood of Nijkerk. More than this, he invited us to visit his various brothers, of whom he seemed to have many, mostly farmers in Gelderland. We made up our minds at the time that we would take advantage of this hospitality by proxy, the more readily as he informed us that we should find his sisters-in-law and his nephews and nieces wearing the costume of the country; but we never got further than talking about it. He told us that he and his family wore the ordinary garb, and that he for his part thought it much more beautiful. When we disagreed with him on this point, he suggested, with a very waggish look, that, if my admiration for strange costume was sincere, I should wear it! This was a final argument, the wit and subtlety of which he chuckled over for some time.

In Elspeet the people had assured us that they very much preferred their old costume, but that it was so complicated, and entailed so much more work, that they were glad to save themselves trouble by buying ready-made German clothes, or at least omitting from their costume the headgear. I expect that the time taken over the making or "getting up" of an elaborate cap is a consideration, now that trade and keen competition enter into the life of the humblest peasants.

Although Gelderland for the time was under water,

the roads, being constructed on the dykes and much higher than the pastureland, were open, and we were able to get from place to place in the covered two-wheeled cart which it is possible to hire from one's landlord, or from an adjacent farmer, at exorbitant prices.

During one of these long drives we passed through some miles of pretty country, apparently just recovering from the flood. I noticed many fields carpeted with most exquisite wild-flowers ; among them were violets, daffodils, lilies of the valley, wild-hyacinths, and others strange to me. On each side of us stretched large plantations of young trees, each row separated from the next by a tiny canal. I longed to get out of our cart and wander through these fields and woods, picking sweet spring flowers : it was a glorious day, and it would be much more pleasant to saunter about in the sunshine than to continue jolting along in our cart. So (very foolishly, I confess) we dismissed our carriage, despising the warnings of our coachman that the weather would change, and that the fields were unsafe. This good advice I put down to cupidity. Soon he had disappeared in the distance ; and triumphantly we started, bent on amassing the fragrant treasures which seemed to be wasting themselves in this lovely spot. All went well enough on the borders of the small woods, although the ground was little else but mud. We jumped the streams, and gathered the flowers happily enough, all the time keeping the main-road in sight ; but, once in the fields, a spirit of adventure seized us.

Far away across acres of green meadows we saw a lovely farmhouse, with its thatched roof looking like the softest velvet, surrounded by many picturesque outbuildings. Cows were grazing in the fields between the outbuildings and the farmhouse, and the sight of these reassured us that here at least the ground had recovered from the floods, for where cows could walk I naturally concluded we could follow. Besides, though I was loath to admit such weakness to Nico, who had never approved the escapade, I felt tired enough already to rejoice in the prospect of a rest and a glass of milk at the farmhouse where also we could certainly secure some kind of vehicle to take us to our destination. For this luxury I felt that I would give untold gold. Accordingly, we struck out bravely enough, intending to make a bee-line for the farm. Of course, this was out of the question. Frequently we had to make long détours to find the little bridges over the narrow canals which serve the purpose of dividing the fields as our hedges do in England. The ground was soft, and soon our boots were heavy with mud. The farmhouse was still a long way off when we came across a piece of water with irregular banks and with grass and dandelions growing covering its surface. Evidently it was not a dividing canal (it was too uneven and too narrow); but to avoid it would take us a long way round. Anything was better than that, and, taking my courage in both hands I jumped it. So did Nico, simultaneously. We then found out for certain that it was not a canal, but a dike in the lately flooded field, and the water extended much




farther than it appeared to do, the treacherous grass and flowers concealing its extent. The impetus of our jump placed us in a far worse position than if we had waded through ; for we landed on all fours in a deep bath of liquid mud, and when we managed to scramble to our feet we were standing in a quagmire nearly up to our knees. We gazed at each other, and, in spite of our sad plight, laughed. In truth, we must have presented an amusing spectacle. I can't speak of my own appearance ; but as for poor Nico, he was covered with the rich black mud, in which we had been unwillingly wallowing, and was decorated with weeds in which were horribly visible various crawling water-insects ! In spite of my laughter, I felt very much inclined to cry ; but I put a brave face on it. "At least," I said, "we shall no longer be afraid of wetting our feet." We trudged along slowly, for often our feet almost stuck fast in the mud. The sun was fast disappearing, and all the warmth and brightness of the spring day was over. The evening, dull and cold and gray, was upon us, and we were chilled to the bone in soaking clothes. We endeavoured to console each other by talking of the kind, hospitable folk we should find at the farm, who would sympathize with our misfortunes, and do their best to bring warmth and comfort to our weary, jaded bodies. They were two forlorn and draggled creatures who walked up the neat paths leading to the bright-green door of the farmhouse. A little row of sabots outside struck terror to our hearts as we realized the immaculate cleanliness of these farmhouse interiors, whose occu-

pants invariably leave their sabots outside and walk about in their stockinged feet. In answer to our timid knock, a comely woman, wearing the gold chain which told us that she had been a native of North Holland, opened the door. She threw up her hands at the sorry sight which met her eyes. We explained or rather Nico explained, what had happened, and she took us in hand as if we were two naughty children. She and her daughter, a pretty girl of sixteen, led us to an outhouse, and helped us to get off our boots and various articles of clothing not absolutely necessary for convention. She seemed relieved when we had thus divested ourselves of the outer covering of mud, and even pitied me, till I began to feel more sorry for myself than ashamed of the stupidity which had brought us to this pass. Handing Nico over to the care of her husband, a burly, good-natured man decorated with as many gold buttons as could be found room for on his velveteen coat, she took me to a very cold and severely-furnished parlour, and out of various roomy chests she dragged equally roomy garments which she wrapped round my unresisting body. I gladly followed her to the kitchen or living-room, where she dosed me with a warm drink compounded of rum and lemons, which her daughter had been preparing. Nico underwent a similar transfiguration, and burst on my astonished eyes in a complete rig-out of the farmer's best clothes, which were many sizes too large. His appearance tickled the family mightily.

I slept that night for the first and only time in our

of the cupboard-in-the-wall bedsteads which I have mentioned. It was quite tranquil (to quote a Dutch hotel-keeper whom I once questioned as to the cleanliness of his ancient wooden bedstead); but it was stuffy, and, tired as we were, we did not sleep well. Our sleep, such as it was, came to an end at five o'clock in the morning, when various noises betokened that the family were astir. Nico wrapped himself in a blanket and cautiously opened the door leading to the kitchen. The father, the mother, and the daughter (who was an only child), were sitting at breakfast with the farm servants—a simple meal which consisted of bread and cheese and coffee. The strange apparition at the door was greeted with laughter and suppressed giggles; but Nico stood his ground, and explained that we should be glad to have our clothes, in order that we might get up and dress. Upon this our garments, dried and brushed, but bearing unmistakable traces of yesterday's adventure, were brought to us, and we dressed ourselves as best we could in our somewhat shrunken attire. Possibly it was just as well that there was no mirror: otherwise our appearance might have given us some qualms. A piece of mottled soap was the only toilet accessory supplied by the good people; they may have had a comb, but we did not feel tempted to borrow it. Our simple and primitive toilet completed, we bashfully entered the *huiskamer*—the living-room. It was unoccupied except by the *vrouw* herself. It was a picturesque, low-ceilinged room, its oak beams decorated with various joints of pig, hung where the smoke from

the peat fire might reach them. Right under the enormous chimney were suspended strings of small dried fish, and a kettle was hanging by a heavy iron chain over a peat fire, which was burning with a clear soft glow and giving forth a warmth most comforting to our still weary and aching bodies. We drew up chairs to the hearth and watched the hostess preparing our breakfast. The coffee had been ready for some time, and the bright brass pot containing it was standing on an earthenware vessel full of burning embers. This stand, called a "test," is sometimes made of metal; the earthenware stands, being of many shapes and colours and brightly glazed, are much more attractive. The more substantial part of our repast consisted of cheese and coarse bread, and, by way of delicacy, slices of black rye bread, which, although heavy and not prepossessing in appearance, is said to be wholesome. Our coffee we took without either sugar or milk, and very strong. It was not palatable; but at least it was stimulating, and we were too much chastened to be anything but thankful for whatever our hostess chose to give us. She was really as kind as possible. To protect my feet from the cold stone floor, she brought a little wooden stool, made like a box with a perforated lid, and containing a test full of burning peat. These little *stoofs* are very comforting, and are to be found all over Holland. They are sometimes made of elaborately-carved oak with bright metal ornaments at the corners, with a name or an initial picked out in polished brass nails. The Dutch women carry them to



church in the winter, and those who come without can generally hire them from the sacristan at a small charge.


During our breakfast we became very friendly with the good woman and her husband, for the farmer had come in to have a look at us and to inquire how we had slept. Our meal ended, he took us all over his farm, showing us his well-kept stables and cowsheds and his stock of vehicles. Some of the latter were very old and quite beautiful in design, and included a gilt and carved sleigh of the Louis XV. period which had been made for one of his ancestors. We visited also the bright-tiled dairy, where the milk was gleaming in big blue basins; there was also the churn, looking like a very tall, brightly-coloured narrow barrel. Their method of churning is rather peculiar. A piece of wood is cut the same size as the barrel and evenly perforated. This is fastened to a long pole; it is then inserted in the barrel, and moved up and down with great regularity till the butter comes.

In the cowshed we duly admired the beautiful sleek cows, and pitied the poor calves destined for the butcher. These unhappy creatures are boxed up in a sort of wooden cage against the wall, which does not allow them any movement; and thus they are kept and fed for weeks, until they are fat enough to fetch a good price in the market. Doubtless the system answers its purpose, or it would not be adopted; but one would think that the veal would be none the less wholesome if the poor animal were allowed to enjoy the sweets of

comparative liberty during the few weeks it has to live. Veal is deemed the most delicate and even the most nourishing meat in Holland; far from being considered indigestible, it is generally ordered for invalids, and is always provided on festive occasions. I must admit that it appeared to me to be superior to English veal. Possibly this may be owing to the cruel method of fattening, just as the fattened and crammed Surrey fow is infinitely superior to the ordinary barndoor chicken.

Through a door in the cowshed we re-entered the *huiskamer*, and were regaled with more coffee, this time sweetened with sugar-candy apparently strung on coarse white thread. This sugar is extremely dear in Holland, something like 3s. a pound, and it is used sparingly in the good old-fashioned farmhouses instead of the metallic squares of beetroot sugar with which all Continental travellers are familiar. (While on the subject of condiments, I must insist that the salt is remarkably bad in all small towns and villages of Holland. It is very coarse, and generally so damp as to make it unpleasant to use; add to this the fact that one salt cellar, without a spoon, is considered sufficient to supply the needs of a tableful of people, and that each person helps himself with the tip of his knife, covered with gravy or egg or some other article of food, and you will realize that its colour, consistency, and quality, leave much to be desired.)

By this time I felt that I had been up for many hours, but I saw by the delightful old clock hanging again on the wall that it still wanted a few minutes to nine.



Two painted metal mermaids, generously endowed with curly hair and with wreaths of what I supposed to be seaweed, bobbed up and down on a painted sea at each swing of the pendulum; and when the clock struck nine in a wheezy and bored tone a dolphin appeared above the horizon and gravely bent his jointed head nine times, presumably in salutation to the beauteous mermaids, who ceased their monotonous movement while the clock was striking—perhaps I ought to say while the dolphin paid his hourly respects to them. The boer and his wife were delighted at our admiration of their clock, which was evidently a household god.

The vrouw thereupon showed us all her treasures—various jewels belonging to her cap and clasps for her necklace, then the caps themselves, then her great-grandmother's gold cap, which was preserved as a family heirloom, while she and her daughter possessed similar ones. These golden caps, which are costly, are beaten out to fit each individual head, and have a hole at the top for ventilation. They are very striking when worn without any covering, as is the case when the women are occupied about their household duties. They are polished to an extreme pitch, and reflect the surroundings of the wearer in the quaintest manner. To see such a cap in the distance, if the sun happens to catch it, is to be dazzled by the glare of brilliant light which it reflects. These caps are generally given to girls at the time of their confirmation.

We were called upon to admire the ironing-boards

hanging on the walls, the backs of which are elaborately carved and decorated. Then the family Bible was brought out and duly admired. It was reverently taken from its resting-place in the depths of a fine old mahogany press, and the outer covering of white linen removed. It was an enormous volume bound in dark leather, its corners and clasps of heavy hand-wrought silver. We opened it carefully. It bore the date 1708 and contained the record of the farmer's family from that time. It had the marks of frequent use. With a touch of sentiment one would not have looked for under such a phlegmatic exterior, the good lady drew from between the leaves of the Holy Book a lock of soft golden hair cut from the head of their little dear son—the only boy they had had. With tears in her eyes and quivering lips, she told us the sad trouble they had gone through. Six children had been born to them, and of all these only one girl survived. The farmer sadly shook his head, and told Nico, now full of genuine sympathy, how hard it was that he had no son to inherit his well-stocked farm and carry on the old name when he himself should have passed away.

By this time we were depressed; but we tried to cheer the old couple by talking of the good marriage their pretty daughter would be sure to make. In the days to come their house would be filled with merry grandchildren, who would gladden their hearts, and they would certainly be fortunate in having a son-in-law who would carry on everything under his father-in-law's able guidance for many years, and so the

prosperity of the family would increase. This cheerful view of the situation seemed to brighten them up, although the farmer still spoke sorrowfully of the passing away of the old name which had been associated with the farm for nearly two centuries.

After all these confidences, especially considering that the family were well-to-do, it was a difficult matter to broach the question of payment for their hospitality. When Nico nervously skated on the thin ice of this subject, and also spoke of hiring a conveyance to take us to the nearest town, at a distance of some fifteen kilometres, we were assured that we must not think of offering any remuneration. Indeed, with the greatest tact and good-breeding they told us that our involuntary and unlooked-for visit had been a very welcome event in their quiet lives, and that at any future time they would be truly pleased to see us, if we would go so far out of our way as to pay them a visit. I am quite sure that they meant what they said, and that if ever we again visit that out-of-the-way spot our welcome will be hearty.

We now felt inclined to bless the misadventure which had thus led to our being taken into the bosom of this typical Dutch family, who had really improved on such close and intimate acquaintance. After more coffee, the farmer harnessed two horses to his most pretentious carriage—a covered vehicle on four wheels—and we made our grateful farewells to the vrouw and her daughter. After much hand-shaking, we mounted the carriage, and off we drove in fine style, Nico sitting

next to the farmer in front, I contenting myself with more sheltered if less honourable seat at the back of the cart. We had an uneventful drive to the nearest town. The sturdy Flemish horses got over the ground at good pace, Nico and the farmer meanwhile discussing crops and cattle.

We created quite a sensation at the little hotel, where the farmer was evidently well known. Our adventure was related by him and discussed with much interest and much to my embarrassment, by the undersized and underbred townsmen who were smoking the strong cigars and playing billiards in the little cafe where our good friend had lunched with us. The simplicity and natural courtesy of our friend only emphasized the uncouth behaviour of the group, who watched our every mouthful and did not scruple to sit at the same table with us, puffing their rank smoke down our very throats, laughing boisterously at the coarse jokes the more witty ones made at our expense as the farmer, good simple soul! told his tale. At last the trying meal came to an end, and our friend left us loaded with kind messages and hearty thanks to his wife.

The news of our arrival and our experiences had attracted all the available population of the small town to the hotel and the neighbouring pavement. The condition of our clothes was the subject of much humorous criticism. As quickly as might be we paid our reckoning and hurried off to the station. Here again we found that our fame had preceded us.

In desperation we inquired where the next train due was bound for, and took tickets accordingly, only too glad to get away from these ill-bred people and their vulgar jokes. Indeed, we were cowardly enough to evade observation as much as possible till we were once more in touch with our luggage, and could discard disreputable clothes and do away with all traces of our soaking. Later we sent to the farmer and his wife and daughter tokens of our gratitude in forms beautiful and useful which (I hope) would please them.

So we passed out of Gelderland, through the still half-flooded country, beautified with the emerald patches of grass which here and there rose out of the waters, passing on our way villages where the houses were apparently thatched with the softest and most velvety moss, which lay on the roofs like a gorgeously embroidered coverlet of many colours. Out of the moss sometimes grew bunches of vivid yellow blossoms. Nowhere could we see the red roofs and green houses which one learns to accept as a necessary part of a Dutch landscape.

As the sun set over this watery country, it caught up and intensified all the greens and yellows of the landscape, and with its far-reaching golden rays discovered every slightest shade of colour on the velvet roofs of the houses, making a dazzling wide brilliance which, in this gray land of Holland, must be seen to be believed, but once seen can never be forgotten.

CHAPTER VI

OVERYSEL

I WAS anxious to cross over to Urk during a short visit to Overysel. It was the early summer, and that made the passage possible ; in winter, what with ice and gales, it is often impossible to cross, and almost always unpleasant to an indifferent sailor. The steamers start from a town called Kampen. There we stayed at an hotel, architecturally old-fashioned, of large and lofty rooms. The landlord and his wife, two waiters, and two chambermaids, escorted us to our room, and seemed very loath to leave our company. We got rid of some of them by devising various errands ; but the landlord, a tall man of early Victorian appearance and attitudes, stayed, benignly watching while his wife and a maid built up a mass of blankets on a modern and rickety tin bedstead. Although I enjoyed watching our landlord's quaint appearance, I did not enjoy the smell of his rank cigar ; and he was impervious to all our hints that we wished to be alone. In a moment of inspiration, and regardless of fatigue and the lateness of the hour, I suggested food. He was all eagerness to serve us with anything we could fancy. I thought it would

be simpler for him to tell us what he had in the house. "Anything madam would like," he answered: "madam had only to name her wishes." Madam named her wishes, beginning with roast chicken, noting beefsteak on the way, and not forgetting the modest cup of soup. At every fresh dish I named our host's countenance fell lower, and he had sadly to admit that it was not to be had. Apparently the larder was empty. Nico, our interpreter, who was becoming impatient, asked sternly, "What fare have you in the house ready?" After a moment's silence the landlady broke in, as one inspired, "Pickled eels!" I made a meal off rusks and a glass of milk, and our purpose was accomplished, for the landlord left.

I had asked the vrouw to get me a hot-water bottle. After much delay she sent me an earthenware flask about six inches by three. Fortunately, the bed was warm and comfortable without the flask. We were told that the boat left for Urk at seven in the morning: so we gave instructions to be called at 5.30, and ordered our breakfast for an hour later. On our mantelpiece was a highly-ornamental clock, apparently keeping excellent time; it struck and awakened me at every quarter, and thus the effort of rising at half-past five was not great. When we were called, we asked for hot water, and the dear creature brought it in a small porcelain cream-jug. I feel sure that they did this only to amuse us, and look on that hotel-keeper as the most humorous of Dutchmen. When we gently insinuated that the water, though good and hot, was

hardly sufficient for the ablutions of two people, they sent up more in a bucket. We soon completed our toilet, and sat down to breakfast at the appointed hour. On bringing in the coffee, the waiter casually remarked that the boat would have started by this time—it left at 6.30 instead of leaving at 7. Our indignant protests were received with pained surprise, the waiter remarking that we could stay at the hotel that day, and start the next morning. He added that the *table d'hôte* was at five in the afternoon.

We made the best of a bad job, enjoyed breakfast, and wandered on to the quay. The morning was glorious, and the streets were already busy with quaintly clad folk. Servant-maids were shopping and enjoying a gossip one with another, and with peasants who had come in from the country with baskets of vegetables and fruit.

On the quay we met a friendly man, captain of a police boat which was taking soundings all over the Zuyder Zee. Speaking in English, he said he was going to Urk, and would be delighted to take us just for the pleasure of our company. The boat would start in an hour or so. Would we join him in coffee-drinking? At this auspicious moment the mate, a cadaverous-looking man with a prominent Adam's apple, came up in velvet slippers. When I saw him I knew that things would not go as I wished ; and, sure enough, when he heard the plans we had been making, he insisted, in tones of shocked surprise, that it was against the rules, and said that of course the captain

was only joking. The good-natured captain did not roll out strange oaths, as I half hoped he would, but meekly acknowledged that he had been joking, and sadly, I am sure, gave up the prospect of our company.

However, he made inquiries for us, and found that there was in the harbour a Volendam fisher-boat, which had put in for slight repairs. This was indeed good news, for Nico is a friend of all the Volendamers, and many of them take a kindly, if patronizing, interest in myself. We sauntered along the quay, and met the owner of the boat and his mate. They were a welcome sight. They represented Hope for us, and their costume was refreshing to an artist's eye. One was in red—that is to say, the background was red; the garment was so lavishly patched that no two square inches were of the same colour; the whole had been soaked in sea-water and faded in the sun, till all the colours blended exquisitely. The other, in a blue coat, wore old velvet trousers of that Dutch breadth with which most people are now familiar. Both had their hands in their pockets and long cigars in their mouths as they came rolling along towards us. They recognised Nico, who after an interchange of news approached the subject of getting to Urk. Some detail of repairs connected with the fishing-tackle would keep them in Kampen till the afternoon; then we could go with them and welcome, and if there was a fair breeze we should make the island before dark. I had no desire to sleep on the boat; but the day was

glorious, and the breeze seemed to be fair. Therefore, I made no objection.


It seemed ages since we had breakfasted, and I was thinking interestedly of luncheon: so we wandered away from the Volendamers and left the quay. We strolled in and out of the narrow streets till we found ourselves in a big square. There was a clock-tower opposite to us; it was just striking eight. Time stands still in Kampen. We had another breakfast. The old gates of the town are very interesting. The little windows in the four towers and in the building over the archway are bordered by bright bricks, and have wooden shutters decorated with an hour-glass design, in some cases on a pale-blue ground, in others on red. This sounds rather finicking; but the windows are so small, and the construction is so solid and massive, that the effect is charming, and only to be met with, I believe, in some of the quaintest old towns in Holland. Kampen possesses a medieval town-hall, on the side of which is built a very crooked tower. I did not find out whether it was built so, or whether time has gradually urged it out of the perpendicular; but the slant was very evident. On the other side of the town-hall were some very beautiful stone figures. This lovely little building was too much for Nico: he sat down there and then to sketch it. Of course, a large crowd soon gathered round him and criticised him freely.

Except in the country villages, we were always the objects of much interest and curiosity. Not only when Nico was sketching, but also when we were

walking through the towns looking at the sights, children would run in front of us, and then walk slowly back, just to see what we were really like. I did not get used to it, but became very shy and apologetic, and would have dressed myself up as a Volendameress did I not feel sure that my disguise would soon have been penetrated. When I am once more at home, first comes a feeling of relief at being a nonentity, and afterwards, I think, I miss these overwhelming attentions and feel neglected.

By-and-by we retraced our steps to the quay and found the boat almost ready to start. (Alas for the five o'clock *table d'hôte*, with its visionary delicacies !)

Our boat, as a picture, was perfect. The sails were of reddish-brown, with the letters V. D. painted large on each. They were patched and repatched till it was difficult to say which had been the original cloth. The boat was very old, and in parts seemed only to be kept together with patches of tarred canvas ; damp green moss grew everywhere ; even the nets looked scarcely strong enough to stand the strain of a good haul. The two poor old Volendammers were fit masters of such a tub, and I felt that we were tempting Providence in trusting ourselves to it. Neither was it the sweetest or cleanest boat that can be imagined, and the smell of very stale fish is not the company one would choose for a four or five hours' voyage. But the Volendammers are attractive raconteurs, and I hoped that Nico would extract from them much interesting and useful information.



The poor old boat drifted slowly away from land. The day was calm, and it seemed very doubtful whether we should reach Urk before dark. Our hosts proved to be all I had hoped. They told us long stories of their adventures. One of them had been to England as witness at a trial to settle a dispute between a Volendam boat and an English boat. He described the short visit to London with enthusiasm, and, although forty years had passed since the great event, he spared us no detail.

We *did* reach Urk that night, but not till after dark. We shook the bony old fists of our fisher friends, leaving in them a little golden memento of our trip, to make up for the fish they had not caught. On our way we landed for quarter of an hour at Skokland, an island which is inhabited solely by the keepers of the three lighthouses and their families. A few years ago the inhabitants were ordered to leave the island on account of its very dangerous floods, and were given land elsewhere. It must be rather uncanny to live in this place, to wander in the silent streets, past the open doors of empty houses, to enter the damp, dreary, unused church. But surely the place is still haunted with the ghosts of the old Skokers. I seemed to feel them walking near me in the grass-grown streets, and to hear them rustle through the doors of the forsaken dwellings. Nico longed to make a sketch; but the place was too uncanny. I hurried him back to our boat and our two patient fishermen.

The hotel at Urk was a pleasant surprise. The



gradually growing bolder, plunged into the heart of the island, among the low-built cottages and small shops, which at every step reminded me of dear old Volendam.

I entered a shop to buy sweets for the babies. I was served by a comfortable body in a tight white cap apparently pinned to her cheeks with gold ornament at each pointed side. A small red shawl, with fringe edges, was pinned over her shoulders and crossed in a point at the spot where the waist ought to be, leaving a triangular open space at the neck, which was filled in with a white vest. The ubiquitous coral necklace, with very handsome clasps of gold filigree, crowned the whole. The lower part of her body was hidden behind the counter in the narrow little shop; but doubtless she had the thick skirt and the closely-pleated apron which are generally worn by the fair sex on the island. She was very conversational, and talked at me a good deal. I gathered that she was anxious to know if I was English; that she supposed London was larger than Urk; that her husband had once been as far as Yarmouth, and spoke English well. She showed me her scanty stock of picture postcards, of which I bought any she suggested to me; and at last I thought the time was ripe for my inquisitiveness to have a look inside. When I had made her understand that I was longing to pass the curtained door shutting us off from the *huiskamer* of the cottage, she graciously invited me to enter.

Again there were the cupboard-beds of peasant

Holland, the bright earthenware dishes, and the brilliantly-polished brass. The floor was of brick, and the walls were mostly of coloured tiles, of which she was evidently very proud. Here also was an enviable piece of family furniture—a huge oak bureau, such as one frequently meets with in these out-of-the-way places. When I had cordially admired the press, and expressed appreciation of the industry which had brought it to such a pitch of perfection in the way of polish, “Ah, yes,” she said with much complacency: “a stranger once came here from London, and offered my husband a thousand guldens [£83] for it; but we would not sell it.” How often have I heard of that stranger hailing from London, and wondered at his foolishness, and also at his luck in meeting with folks who were crazy enough not to accept his rash offer! I used to think I should like to meet this generous person; but my day of illusions is past, and I sadly realize that he must be a myth. I fancy the tradition encourages the unwary, who perhaps offer about half the sum, and are surprised to find it eagerly accepted. There are not many flies on the Dutch peasant when he takes to curio-dealing, and certainly there are no bargains to be picked up among the simplest of them. For little bits of oak or pewter, of practically no value at all, I have been asked prices that would make a Bond Street dealer blush. I knew my Holland well enough to refrain from rash offers in the little cottage where I found myself.

I was much more interested in the large family of

children who began to put in an appearance for the mid-day meal. The boys, like their fathers, wore baggy knickerbockers and round hats, similar to those of Zeeland; tightly-fitting coats, often of velveteen, decorated galore with flat buttons—silver on the coat and gold at the collar, with two enormous hammered discs of silver at the waist. The little girls wear closely-fitting woollen bonnets, crocheted in stripes of many colours. All the women, old and young, wear sleeves reaching only to the elbow; but the babies have bright woollen sleevelets, which cover their bare arms from the elbow downwards.

The inhabitants of the island are pleasant folk, and many of them are strikingly well grown and good-looking. These qualities are particularly welcome and pleasing to the traveller who has been rebuffed and mobbed by the uncomely inhabitants of other provinces—by those of Marken, for example, although it is only fair to say that their manners have improved during the last two or three years, and one forgives them freely in gratitude for their most charming of all Dutch costumes.

Urk is on elevated land, and does not suffer from the floods. The nearest neighbour, the island of Skokland, had to be abandoned because of the floods. The inhabitants settled in a part of Overysel called Kampereiland, on the Zuyder Zee, and are still able to pursue their calling on the deep.

Not knowing in the least which way I had come or whither I wished to go, I thought I could scarcely be



lost on such a small island. I wandered on and on, taking many turnings, and every now and then thinking that I recognised the cottage in front of which Nico was painting. Again I found myself, I thought, passing the same little shop I had just left ; but on examination I found it was not the same, only a facsimile, with the same little stock and the same well-cleaned windows. I began to feel like a person walking in a labyrinth, and came to the conclusion that Urk was not such a small place after all.

At last, in desperation, I seized a boy by the arm, and, showing him a small silver coin, mentioned the name of the hotel, endeavouring to explain to him by gestures that I wished him to guide me thither. He talked for a long time, and then held out his hand for the money ; but I would run no more risks, and clung to him until we reached the little inn, where he received his dubbeltje and made off. Nico had come back to the hotel, and, not finding me there, had gone out to look for me. When he again returned, he was lost in wonder that we had missed each other in this small place. He tried to reason it out, but after much fruitless discussion gave up the attempt.

One scene in this nightmarish sort of a walk will always be indelibly impressed on my brain. It is that of a group of women, who stood gossiping at a corner with babies in their arms and small children clinging to their skirts. The first time I passed them I smiled benignly on them and their babies, and they graciously returned my salutation. When again I came upon them at the


same spot, unexpectedly and much to my dismay, I was too vexed and bewildered to smile; and when, after much wandering and turning many corners, I passed them for the third time, I would fain have been invisible. I tried to saunter carelessly by with an air of nonchalance, which, I fear, was but ill assumed. This time I turned in a direction opposite to my previous attempts; it was a little, narrow, dark street smelling evilly of stale fish. I hurried along, anxious to leave the odours behind me, and feeling pretty sure that it would lead me to the quay, whence I could easily make my way to the hotel. After about a hundred yards, the street turned sharply to the right instead of to the left, as I had hoped it would. There was nothing for it but to go on. Again I stepped briskly forward, and once more I had to follow its turning to the right; a few more steps, and just round the corner were my friends with their babies! They must have thought I was mad.

There was a time during our travels when the town of Zwolle seemed to have a magnetic attraction for us. For some reason, I did not want to go to Zwolle. Perhaps it was that some churlish porter had vexed me as we passed through; perhaps the stout, self-satisfied name of the place was forbidding; or I may have been possessed by a spirit of contradiction to my fellow-travellers, encouraged, if not caused, by weeks of wind and constant rain. It was Nico's native land, and, if the weather during this particular visit did not fulfil expectations, I was not responsible for its vagaries, or

for their effect upon me. For a long time, whenever we wished to go anywhere, or whatever excursions we planned with a view to exploring the country, it seemed to be always imperative that we should pass through Zwolle, change at Zwolle, take the train from Zwolle, or hire a carriage from Zwolle; and this although we continually changed our headquarters, while confining ourselves, I must admit, to the blue boundaries of Overysel—at least, the boundaries are blue on the map, as those of Friesland are green, and Overysel is so plainly laid out in my mind as a blue province that it would ruin all my carefully acquired knowledge of the geography of Holland not to insist on this fact and keep it ever before me. It was after we had spent a week trying how not to go to Zwolle that we decided that a dip into Nature—a visit to Urk—had become necessary to cheer us up, and to give Nico some primitive human subjects for his brush. Our first step was, of course, to get to Zwolle and change, wait half an hour in the too familiar waiting-room, till our train for Kampen (where one takes boat for Urk) should be due. Once more we bought at the restaurant the series of postcards which twice before we had posted to dearest friends and merest acquaintances. It was weak, perhaps; but I seized eagerly on any distraction, however feeble, which might take my thoughts from this city, to whose magnetism I felt I should eventually succumb. We got to Kampen, and thence to Urk, conquering all obstacles, as I have already described. The weather had not improved,

and I actually suggested that, since all roads eventual lead to Zwolle, we might as well pay a definite visit to that town. Nico was delighted, and I confess that the surrender on my part was due to the fact that I realized that we must go thither eventually, and that I might well make a virtue of necessity.

Having thus overcome my very unreasonable determination not to visit Zwolle, I found it a most interesting town, possessing a fine Gothic gateway called the Sassepoort, with a turret at each corner (surrounding a clock tower) charmingly broken up with little windows decorated with their lapel-like wooden shutters painted pale blue and white. There are also a fifteenth-century church containing a famous pulpit and (what was most to my liking) a few small bas-reliefs in stone, of Byzantine character, casually built into the outside wall with an irregularity quite oblivious of the architectural design. In the neighbourhood of this old town lived Thomas à Kempis, the author of that marvellous book *The Imitation of Christ*. At the age of twenty he settled in the obscure monastery known as the Convent of St. Agnes; he became Subprior, and as such he lived, dying, at the age of ninety-one, in 1471. The manuscripts of this wonderful book, in his beautiful handwriting, are kept at Louvain and Antwerp. It has been claimed by some that he only transcribed the work and that it was really written by John Gersen, the famous Chancellor of Paris; but the balance of evidence seems to be in favour of Thomas à Kempis. To the casual reader this book seems to be much more like the



writing of a recluse than that of a busy man of affairs, however saintly.

We created excitement in Zwolle. We were followed and surrounded by groups of natives, who stopped when we stopped, and when we sought to escape them by doubling on our tracks they also retraced their steps. I don't care to add up the sums we spent on useless objects in the shops where we took refuge from our tormentors. When Nico, courageous man, sat down on his campstool to make a sketch of the gateway, the crowd became so eager and importunate that a sturdy little policeman came up to inquire the cause of the disturbance; he also remained for a while, to criticise and to admire. We tried to discover on what day and hour the museum might be found open, but without success. We went to the door and rang the bell many times during our short stay; but our summons produced only an old woman at a window, who shook her head severely, until we left the door with hanging heads and a sense of wrong-doing.

It was really a curious coincidence, which filled me with superstitious fear, that Zwolle was as loath to let us go as she had been persistent in her unspoken invitations. The Dutch railway time is always twenty minutes in advance of the town time. This was the cause of our losing two trains in one day when we would have departed from Zwolle. On the first occasion Nico was sketching in a side-street, and had planted me safely in a confectioner's shop, with a cup of chocolate, and his watch open on the table beside me, set to town



dare say we had some reasons for taking tickets to this place; but I cannot imagine what they were. Still, as luck would have it, we saw a rather interesting sight. A train full of Russian emigrants of the poorest class had stopped for the Customs. Poor, miserable, travel-stained wretches, they had crossed the whole of Germany packed tightly together in the fourth-class carriages of which the train was composed. The women wore kerchiefs on their heads, and little but rags covered their bodies. They were carrying bundles of clothes, and their few possessions were tied up in dingy sheets. Most of them had one or two bare-footed and bare-headed children clinging to their skirts, and staring with round eyes at the unfamiliar scenes. The railway officials edified me extremely by the excessive good-humour and kindness they showed to the outcasts. One poor old woman was accidentally left behind, and ran along on the platform in the wake of the departing train, wringing her hands and shedding tears. A dear little porter, with the round red cheeks and the black hair of a Dutch doll, comforted her in a language of which she was totally ignorant. The sight of his good-humoured face calmed her fears. She suffered herself to be led to the station-master, who, with much patience and many gestures, made her understand that the next train would carry her safely to Rotterdam, where she would rejoin her friends and relations.

We scuttled from Oldenzaal by the first available train, and subsequently spent two or three days at Almelo, a

busy industrial centre, where the workmen, treated like kings, are noted for their Socialistic tendencies. In spite of the town's modernity, many of the women still wear the old costume, and in the church which we attended we had good opportunities of admiring its quaintness. The cap is tight, with a closely-pleated tail of beautiful broad lace, which rests on the back of the wearer in narrow folds. The bodice, cut according to the prevailing method, is garnished from the waist downwards with a closely-pleated basque hanging almost to the knees, and half hiding the plain skirt, which clears the ground by several inches, and displays thick black leather slippers adorned with large steel or silver buckles. It is a severe costume, and includes no jewellery, except the necklace, and even this is omitted as often as not.

Another cap which one sees worn with this costume also fits closely to the head; but instead of the long stiff lace tails, which bob up and down and give rather a bird-like appearance to these stolid Almelo vrouwen, it has at the back of the head narrow muslin frills, carefully goffered, and evidently entailing a good deal of work, but not nearly so costly as the lace tails.

From Almelo we did our best to get to Breklenkamp, a village close to the German frontier. Nico had either dreamt or heard all sorts of wonderful tales about this place, with its oddly-dressed inhabitants. In Almelo, which was the nearest point on the railway, few people had even heard the name, and those who


fancied they might have heard it could tell us nothing about the place. There was no tramway, no steamboat on the canal, no local omnibus, and apparently no driver who knew the way : so we were obliged to give up our project. If I had not seen the name in print on my map, I should have looked upon the place as existing only in Nico's imagination.

There was nothing much out of the ordinary to be seen or done to the east of Overysel : so back again we went to Zwolle on our way north. Here, of course, we had two or three hours to wait, and we boldly went into the inquisitive town once more. The people were too much for us. We felt that we had done nothing to deserve such extraordinary interest, being neither notorious criminals nor crowned heads. We got into a tramway car and took tickets to the terminus. I was rather intriguée on arriving there to see the conductor take a large parcel from under the seat ; he informed me that it contained the dinner of the proprietor of a restaurant close by. This meal was sent daily by his partner, who kept the buffet at the railway-station. It gave me an insight into the apparent resources of the small restaurant, and half explained the difficulty we had frequently experienced in getting food at such places when we were late for the *table d'hôte*. Evidently this particular restaurant did not keep on the premises a stock of food sufficient to insure some being left over for the proprietor. Or did his partner provide him daily with some dish too dainty or expensive for his customers ? If we had had time, we should

probably have visited the place, and been offered a choice of many dishes from an elaborate menu which would ultimately have resolved itself into a beefsteak hastily fetched from the butcher and served with potatoes which had often been fried before.

Our friend the conductor answered intelligently the questions Nico put to him as to the country round about. We were anxious to visit the village of Staphorst ; but he struck terror to our hearts by relating the unpleasant experiences some casual visitors had gone through in that village. He himself had been a coachman in his day, and had frequently had occasion to drive through the village, a feat which he always performed with as much haste as possible and many qualms. According to him, the people in this hamlet had a terrible reputation, such as one would attribute to Italian brigands rather than to the Dutch peasantry. He said that they were very free with their knives, and ever ready and eager to pick a quarrel. More than once, he asserted, he had been violently attacked, while driving through the village, from no other motive than that of malice. His story sounded genuine, and Nico, rather alarmed, asked whether it would be safe for us to stay in the village. The conductor advised us to take no risks, but added that he did not suppose any harm would happen to us during a daylight visit.

All this fired our ardour, and we proceeded by train to Staphorst as soon as possible. We found the place to be a scattering of thatched houses much spread over



the district. The inhabitants looked a poor and certainly rather a rough lot. No doubt the tales we had heard prejudiced us against them. Nico made a few sketches of the very picturesque houses and a few of the people. Far from being the villainous wretches we had been led to expect, they were civil and obliging, simple and primitive. It is, of course, possible that their passions may be easily aroused, and that then the knife leaps out.

There we met a delightful person following the trade of sabot-maker, in which he was assisted by his two grown-up sons. We were walking through the village on the look-out for objects of interest, when our attention was arrested by the sight of two men going through rather an extraordinary process for the purpose of sawing up the trunk of a tree into small blocks. The trunk, still in its original condition, was placed on two pedestals high above the ground, and the ends were firmly attached with nails and ropes to the supports. On this improvised bridge a man was standing, holding one end of a long saw ; the other end was held by his brother ; and the two, by alternate movements, worked the saw up and down until the trunk was cut in two. The operation was continued until all of the trunk was in small sections, the top man retaining his place until the last section was sawed away. We watched the whole process, and when it was finished the young men very civilly answered questions Nico put, explaining that these blocks of wood were cut for the purpose of sabot-making. Then they bashfully



suggested that perhaps we should like to see their father making sabots from the blocks of wood. Charmed at such unexpected affability, we followed one of the young men to a low thatched cottage a few yards off.

Stooping to pass through the doorway, we entered a dark little workshop lighted only by one small window. Seated with his back to this was the sabot-maker, engaged in finishing off a pair of sabots for his youngest child. He looked at us gravely over his spectacles as we entered, and, with a nod to me and "Goeden avond" to Nico, waited to hear what we had to say for ourselves. A Dutchman's habitation, be it the merest hovel, is very much his castle, and in these small places anything short of extreme courtesy is liable to meet with a severe rebuff. Very politely, therefore, Nico explained that we were from England, and much interested in his occupation, and that we hoped we were not in the way—that our presence would not prevent him from going on with his work. The old man thawed, and after cigars were produced by Nico and handed round we were all on the best of terms. Choosing a block of wood from the pile beside him, the old man began to fashion it into a sabot before our attentive eyes. He chose a tool with precision, feeling the long, sharp blade with his much-scarred thumb, and, holding the block firmly between his leather-protected chest and the carpenter's bench in front of him, shaved away at the wood till the semblance of a shoe appeared. At this he chipped and shaved until the size and the

shape were to his satisfaction. Then, changing his tool, he gouged out the soft white wood from the solid lump. It is for this purpose that a sabot-maker sits with his back to the light—so that it may reveal to him as far as possible what his knife is doing in the toe of the shoe. This last is not a very rapid process. The interior of the shoe must be neatly finished, so that no roughness may injure the frequently bare foot of the prospective wearer.

At last the job is finished, and there is time for conversation. Through an open door in the shed we catch glimpses of an interior, from which a woman's voice—that of his wife—penetrates, joining in the talk, which for the moment is devoted to that interesting and universal topic—the difficulty of making money. Soon she appears upon the threshold, a handsome woman with a baby in her arms, apparently years younger than her white-haired partner. We compliment her broadly on her youthful looks. She tells us, with the delight these people take in talking of their age, that she is forty-five, and that, besides the two big sons we have already met and the baby in her arms, she has two daughters of fifteen and seventeen, in service in Zwolle, to say nothing of three sons who died in infancy, of whom she speaks with equanimity and resignation.

The father of the family is not yet sixty, and is hale and hearty, in spite of his aged appearance, which is probably caused by his sedentary life and the want of fresh air and sunlight. He tells us with pride that his wife is often taken to be his daughter, and with equal

pleasure he assures us that strangers often take him to be a man of at least seventy. Not quite knowing how to receive this remark, we assure him that we should not be likely to make such a mistake. Much annoyed, he quickly interrupts, to insist that a man from Amsterdam who once visited the village guessed his age to be no less than seventy-eight.

By this time we are all so fond of one another that our expressed intention of moving on is met with much disappointment: so, at their kind invitation, we enter the room where the family lives, eats, and sleeps, and gravely drink coffee with them, unsweetened and undiluted with milk. Two cups of this beverage is as much as I can manage, though their hospitality is loath to let me off. A large copper caldron of potatoes hangs over the sunken fire. Evidently it is the time for a meal.

This discovery, made obvious by certain hastily snubbed questions from the younger olive-branches, makes me feel distinctly uncomfortable. Nico, however, boldly takes the bull by the horns, questions them as to the hour of their meal, and protests that we must leave if they put off their dinner on our account. So the potatoes are dished up, with a good supply of cabbage and fat bacon, and the children are satisfied at last.

They plied us with questions of the extraordinary personal nature frequently indulged in by the Dutch peasant. The naïveté of such inquisitiveness relieves it from any suspicion of impertinence. They were

immensely interested to hear that we had come all the way from London, and asked us astounding questions about the great city, their conceptions of which were highly original.

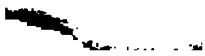
Then, what was our business? Were we married? How large was our family? They added uncalled-for and uncomplimentary guesses at my age. I sat silent most of the time, finding it difficult to overcome my natural shyness sufficiently to give away my very scanty knowledge of Dutch. I don't believe the sabot-maker and his family thought much of me really, although they did their best to hide their poor opinion of my intelligence. I may say here, without undue vanity, that I understand Dutch with ease, though I speak it and read it with difficulty. I think they were rather shocked at my leaving house and child to the care of servants, to gad about foreign lands with my husband. At that time I had no thought of utilizing my experiences, and felt very humble under the implied reproof of the worthy people.

One of the sons of our good friends showed a really remarkable talent for wood-carving, and the mother proudly produced various beautifully-carved and wonderfully well-designed specimens of his work. We wished to buy some of these objects of art; but the son was very bashful about naming a price. At last it was left to us to put our own value on the carving we wished to possess, and this we did to the entire satisfaction of the family and to the comfort of our sense of obligation. The little ones were very ready to accept

kwartjes and cents, though we should not have dared to offer to their parents anything more substantial than thanks.

The sabots, when a sufficient quantity are completed, are taken to the nearest town, in a cart of the simplest design and make. In the case of our friends, they borrowed from a neighbouring farm a young bullock to draw the cart, which was closely watched and guided by one of the sons. Sabots fetch prices varying from 2d. to 2s. the pair ; but an elaborately-carved pair will sometimes fetch quite a large sum. In certain parts of the country the sabots are painted black ; in others, notably in the province of Marken, these wooden shoes are to be seen in many colours.

It was with difficulty that I dragged Nico away from the hospitable family, and it was by the greatest good fortune that we got a lift on a carrier's cart, which landed us at the station just in time for the last train.



CHAPTER VII

DRENTHE

DRENTHE is probably the least known, least cultivated, and least populous, of the provinces of Holland. Though in size it is inferior to only a few of these divisions of the Netherlands, it contains no single city of over 8,000 inhabitants. This is in great measure due to the unfriendliness of the soil, which consists principally of vast stretches of barren moorlands, on which much labour has been spent with little or no result ; for the hopeful and plodding Dutch peasant, encouraged by the efforts of his forefathers (who may be said to have literally made their country even in as far as the mere land is concerned), willingly expends years of patient toil on reclaiming and improving soil on which the peasant of any other nationality would refuse to waste a thought. This perseverance and energy, which is a national characteristic of the Dutch, has been rewarded with marvellous results in many parts of the country ; but the province of Drenthe has remained proof against all efforts. The Government is beginning to take the matter seriously in hand, and has so far succeeded as to inspire the inhabitants of the most

desolate portions of the country with the belief that their fortune is already made, and to tempt them to spend their savings and what little money they can borrow in reckless building operations, in preparations for prosperity that will probably never come—at least, during their allotted span of life. At present the people of Drenthe are engaged chiefly in digging peat from the moors. Assen, the chief town of this desolate province, is a small city which, as far as I could make out, has nothing at all to boast of.

Years ago, when an enthusiastic student at the Amsterdam Academy, Nico visited Drenthe during a long vacation in search of matter for his pencil and brush, and he went through many wonderful experiences. Money was not too plentiful with him, and, to get into the heart of the country, he contented himself with employing the means with which Nature had provided him, in the shape of a pair of strong young legs, helped by an exuberance of spirits and enthusiasm for her beauty that would have overcome worse obstacles than were to be met with. In the course of his wanderings he came upon the village of Gasselte—if, indeed, this little group of farmhouses can be dignified by such a name. Here he put up his easel for some weeks at an inn, which in those days had but one small room for hire (containing a bed in the wall), and a cosy café where the farmers congregated to drink their gin and smoke their long clay pipes round the big table in the middle of the room, on which was placed a large jar full of tobacco, wherefrom all the guests helped them-

selves. This inn was managed by a quaintly-dressed old woman wearing a golden cap ; her husband devoted his life to waiting on the precious cow, to which they looked for milk and butter. Any meat other than pig's flesh was quite unknown in this part ; but the good vrouw's hens laid eggs in abundance, and I do not suppose that in those days Nico's palate was as critical as his appetite was keen. The news of the arrival of a stranger was eagerly spread through the little colony of farmers ; and in the evenings the boers would gather in the café, and, placing Nico in the seat of honour, would listen open-eyed to the wonders he had to tell them of the great city of Amsterdam, from which he had lately come—of theatres, and roads blocked with traffic ; a population which looked upon butcher's-meat as a necessity ; people who did not think of starting on their daily task until the day was well warmed by the friendly sun ; the light green fields of the country places, where immense herds of cows found ample sustenance all through the long summer, and where the vast stretches of useless and desolate moorland were unknown—until the hour grew late. Then the lusty boers, whose time of rising showed them the dawn even in the height of summer, got up from the table, stretching themselves and yawning, to go home to their anxious wives and dream of the wonderful things they had heard.

For ten years ago Gasselte was in a desert rarely visited by the denizens of the outside world. In this peaceful spot Nico spent several happy weeks. All

the farmers were his friends, and offered him unlimited facilities for sketching what and where he listed, considering themselves in great luck when their invitations to him to share their meals were accepted with alacrity, and amply repaid by the stories which the guest related. The majority of these primitive people had never seen a hand-painted picture, and had looked on such examples of art as they possessed in their roughly-illustrated Bibles and the occasional posters left by a commercial traveller at the village inn as results of a mechanical process the workings of which were beyond their reason, but as real and palpable as the wonderful steam-engines and railway-trains which the more travelled among them had seen. I think they looked on Nico as a being from another world, and convinced themselves that it was useless to be surprised at any qualities which he might possess.

He was awakened every morning between the rather ghostly hours of three and four by the sound of a trumpet, and, being sufficiently awake to realize that it was not angels calling, or fellow-students serenading him, he inquired at breakfast as to the wherefore of these weird sounds. His hostess, who was also chambermaid, boots, waiter, and, indeed, all things, supplied him with the causes of this matutinal music. It was the shepherd in quest of his sheep, she explained; and, without worrying her slowly-moving brain with more queries, Nico determined to find out details for himself. Next morning he rose betimes, and at the first sound of the horn sought the shepherd and begged

to be allowed to pass a few hours with him. The request was readily acceded to, and the young artist accompanied the weather-beaten shepherd on his morning rounds. At each blast of the trumpet, the sheep, their bells tinkling, flocked to him from out of the folds, in every direction, on their native farm.

Here and there was a farm whose inhabitants, still asleep, failed to hear the sheep crying to be let loose that they might join their companions and their shepherd. To these folds the latter made his way, holding a horn lantern illuminated by a rough candle, opened the doors, and welcomed the fresh stream of sheep with soft words, evidently understood by the animals, so wrongfully accused of stupidity. For him each of them had its own character and peculiarity, and often its special name. At last the whole gathering, consisting of some thousand sheep, moved off. Round the neck of each was hung a musical little bell; and, as the bells of every flock differ in tone, to facilitate recognition and separation, the many families moved along to the accompaniment of a jangle as musical and inspiring as the cowbells heard through the clear fresh air among the snow-clad mountains of Switzerland. In those days the roads in Drenthe were of enormous width, and cut up into deep furrows by the wheels of heavily-laden carts. On either side for miles and miles were piled up banks of cut turf closely pressed together.

Along these immense white roads the flocks of sheep moved until they were turned on to the moor, there to

wander for miles and miles each day in search of what nourishment they could glean from the heather and other plants growing on the sandy soil. By the time the sun rose they were well advanced on the moor ; by mid-day they were surrounded by miles of the softly-tinted heather, and the shepherd shared with Nico his meal of black and white bread. Every now and then the artist would remain stationary for a while and sketch the beauties of the scene, and the shepherd would linger near him until the migrations of his sheep recalled him to a sense of duty. Long talks they had together, that day and on many another like it, when the shepherd, accustomed to pass the greater part of his life in solitude, chatted for hours of his sheep, his dogs, his lonely life, and his method of living. All his long solitary hours were passed in knitting stockings from the thick wool with which the farmers' wives provided him, paying him a few cents for the making of each pair. His livelihood would scarcely be called lucrative. For the guardianship of each sheep he received from the owner the small sum of two cents—a little under a halfpenny—a year. This wage was supplemented by small portions of corn and vegetables. It would take a good many thousand sheep at this rate to provide an income on which an English farm labourer would consider it possible to keep a wife and family ; yet this lonely man had a cottage in the village, with a wife and two children, to whom their father was almost a stranger. With a happy smile he spoke of the time when the *jongen* (as he called his son) should be

able to come out with him on the moors and imbibe a knowledge of the ways and manners of sheep which would enable him, when the time should come, to undertake the duties of shepherd on his own account. Not a thought of a different kind of existence for his cherished son passed through his mind. A life of long and silent Communings with Nature, apart from the quarrels and ambitions of his fellows, had denuded his simple mind of all wish for better things, even if he would have acknowledged that better things there were. In the evenings, with the same accompaniment of bells, they led the patient animals back to their folds, separated them, fastened them in their various folds till morning should come again; then the shepherd went to his home, and Nico to an admiring circle of boers awaiting his arrival in the half-lit café of the homely inn.

It was after some days spent in this wise that in the course of their wanderings Nico and the shepherd came upon a roughly-built thatched farmhouse in the heart of the moor, miles distant from any other human habitation. Here Nico took leave of the shepherd, and, entering the low door, asked the depressed-looking farmer if he might be his lodger for some few days. The poor man, who was painfully deformed, was startled by such a strange request; but on Nico's assurance that he would live exactly as the family did, and that no preparation would be needed for his reception, he retired into a neighbouring shed, where, he said, he would find his wife and talk the matter over with her. The wife presented herself with a baby in her

arms, and, taking courage at the sight of the youth and his pleasant smile, undertook to answer him in the affirmative.

Without more ado Nico betook himself some yards off the farm, and started painting with all the enthusiasm with which he was filled. Presently the man joined him, and, after expressing wonder and admiration of the skill with which the strange visitor was transferring his farm to paper, opened his lonely heart to the sympathetic youth. He related how with endless trouble he had created his farm with the labour of his own hands, digging away the turf and sand until he came upon the good clay soil beneath, and then draining it off, planting and replanting until he had attained the results which Nico could see for himself; and, indeed, the ground which the farm was built upon and the outlying grounds were several feet lower than the surrounding moor, bearing witness to the farmer's statement that he had literally dug the farm from the difficult land. After all this labour, he had made sufficient money to buy two cows and a young bullock. One of the former had died the last winter, and had left him discouraged and disinclined for further efforts.

At this moment his wife appeared at the door calling her husband and the stranger to supper. The meal was shared by the hunchback, his wife, and five round-eyed giggling children. It consisted of a large earthenware platter of boiled potatoes standing in the middle of the table, and flanked by a small basinful of melted bacon fat. The company sat round the board, and,

after a grace consisting of the Paternoster, eating began with vigour. Each was allowed to dip his or her potato once in the basin of bacon fat. This was all the flavouring allowed, and if, unfortunately, a scrap of potato should detach itself from the whole and drown itself in the general basin of fat, woe to the owner of it! for he was obliged to eat his next three potatoes without a dip in the fat at all. They ate the potatoes with slender two-pronged pewter forks, and it seems to me that a great art must have been required in the handling of the vegetable, so as not to leave even the whole of it in the fat. As Nico was a guest, and a paying guest, this severe rule would not have been enforced in his case; but his care being very great, and his capacity for eating potatoes limited, he passed through the ordeal on this first evening with success. Afterwards he was less lucky, but refused to take advantage of undue privileges accorded to his position.

After supper, seeing that the light had gone and that the one room was surrounded by the cupboard-beds of the family, Nico suggested that he should be shown where he might sleep, whereupon the woman explained, with some show of embarrassment, that he was to take her place by the farmer's side, and share his bed with one of the sons, while she and the rest of the children would sleep in the remaining hole. Hearing this, Nico hastily explained that he was quite unaccustomed to sleep in a bed while travelling, and begged to be allowed to follow his usual habits of sleeping on hay or straw; whereupon he was introduced to a cowshed,

where the remaining cow and the bullock inhabited neighbouring stalls. There was a small hayloft, of which the floor was also the roof of the cow's stall, the wooden divisions of which were the supports on which it rested. This roof or floor was very roughly laid, and from time to time the bullock raised his head and pulled down mouthfuls of the hay on which Nico slept.

It is not surprising that his sleep that first night was broken. The movements of the animals underneath turned his dreams into nightmares, wherein he was concerned in earthquakes and terrible storms at sea, and at four o'clock he was finally and thoroughly awakened by the clanking of a pail as the farmer prepared to milk the cow. The early rising and the open-air life which Nico led for the next fortnight rendered his sleep sound and impervious to any external influences.

During this period his only food was potatoes and bacon fat, which delicacies were served six times during the day, with copious draughts of weak coffee, of which the first bowlful was sweetened by the immersion for a few seconds of a lump of burnt treacle and sugar, dignified by the title of toffee, sugar being beyond the means of these simple folk. I presume that, used in this economical fashion, a small lump of sweet-stuff lasted for some considerable time. If the thirst which begged for second and third helpings of the faintly-tinted rain-water known as coffee was not sufficiently genuine to be satisfied with the unsweetened fluid, the discontented one could wait until it was, on the unreasonable system of the nurses who used to insist

that, if we were not hungry enough to finish our uninteresting milk pudding, it would be only pandering to greediness to help us to the much-desired trifle. At the end of a fortnight of hard work and this satisfying but monotonous diet, Nico longed for the more varied fare of the little inn at Gasselte. When the question of payment was mooted, the good people were much exercised as to what would be a fair sum, sufficient to indemnify themselves and at the same time not too extravagant to startle their guest. After a good deal of calculation and consideration, the wife suggested that 10 cents a day would not be an exorbitant demand on the resources of the artist. As this sum represented but a modest 2d., Nico was very glad to increase it to half a guilder, or 10d. a day, which stupendous generosity startled the man to protestations and the woman to grateful tears. However, Nico quieted their honest scruples by pointing out to them that nowhere else could he have lived at half the cost, and assuring them that all the gratitude was due from his side. Thus he left them, and began his long walk back across the moorlands to Gasselte, followed on his way by blessings and loudly expressed hopes of a speedy reunion.

A week or two later he left the village, in the midst of much hand-shaking and promises on his part to write from the great city. He drove away in the carrier's cart, loaded with many paintings and sketches and parting gifts from the farmers—pots of honey, pounds of what in those days was excellent unadulterated butter,

one or two elaborately-carved pipes, and a few more sentimental offerings in the shape of greeting card composed of bouquets of flowers in stamped satin balanced on paper springs, which stretched to generous dimensions when correctly manipulated. Altogether his adieus took the form of a triumphal ceremony. On his return to Amsterdam his promise of writing was kept faithfully for a month or two, until, amidst the stress of work and play which falls to the lot of hard-working student, Gasselte and its experience became a memory only. The few letters from him which reached the village were considered sufficiently important to be read by the priest from the pulpit to gatherings convened for the occasion.

Eleven years later, seeking experiences and picture in all parts of Holland, we visited the place together. We drove in a rickety cart hired at enormous cost from Essen, which is the nearest point approached by train. A long muddy drive of fifteen kilometres brought us to the village, which had undergone such changes that we were halfway through before Nico realized that we must have passed the inn. We asked our driver diffidently whether the old people and their hotel were still in existence. Thereupon the man drew up his horse and retraced his steps, until we arrived at a large new building, which, he assured us, was the original village inn of Nico's student days. Sadly disappointed, we gave instructions to him to put up his horse, and entered the big bare café. At the sound of our step the old woman came forward to ask our wants. She

was indeed the same Frau Bertels, and after much explanation and ransacking her memory she appeared to remember Nico. Yes: they were making great changes in the village. The Government was going to redeem the country, and armies of workmen were to be sent to dig the turf and sandy soil away, until a good productive clay soil should be reached. If the difficulties of drainage could be overcome, and if the much-needed clay soil existed everywhere under its unfavourable coating of moorland, the fortunes of the province would be vastly improved: pasturelands and potato-fields would quickly cover the hitherto unfruitful and with their carpets of green and yellow. The inn had now four bedrooms, besides an enormous coffee-room.

It appeared that several artists, contemporaries of Nico, attracted by his glowing accounts of the place, had visited the inn and stayed there, and had returned a few times. There was little to eat but eggs, and even these the poor old dame was unwilling to cook, being fearful, as she said, that such food was not good enough for the likes of us. She seemed half dazed, and had lost all the old simplicity which had allowed her to offer the best she had with assurance. We tried to persuade her that we were simple people, and begged her to prepare what she could. The old man, her husband, was still alive, she said, and on the premises; but either she did not inform him of our arrival or he did not care to present himself. We did not see him during our visit. Ten years before their views of

hospitality would have revolted against such treatment of a guest.

To get out of the unpleasant empty room while our meal was being prepared was Nico's only desire; and we wandered, depressed and silent, through the village. Nico had expected to find the place unchanged, and I, of course, had expected a kind of earthly paradise, so glowing had been his descriptions of the picturesque farm and the charming good-hearted people; but during our drive, though we encountered many inhabitants, not one gave us good-day, or even deigned to answer our greetings, acknowledging them only with sulky glances, not even sufficiently interested to take a good stare at us, such as we had become accustomed to all over the country.

The luncheon took its insignificant place among the disappointments of the day. The bread, in former times home-made and trustworthy, was adulterated; the milk was skimmed; and the butter (pardon the Irishism) was margarine. We had come prepared to stay for a few days; but, as matters stood, we were only too glad to engage our coachman to take us back to a railway-station. The old woman parted with us without regret, after charging for our simple meal a sum which would have represented two or three days' board and lodging in that past which seemed so incredibly far away. We paid the bill, as we should have done had the amount been trebled, without a murmur, and packed ourselves and our traps disconsolately in the rickety vehicle which

had had its charm on our hopeful way thither in the morning.

On our journey home we made a detour which gave us a sight of the Hunnebedden, old Roman remains for which Drenthe is famous. Where these enormous masses of granite were quarried, and by what means they were brought thither, are secrets buried with the wonders of the mechanism that raised the Pyramids and constructed the waterways of ancient Rome.

At the station of Assen we had a scene with our coachman, who, learning that our train, the last of the day, was due to leave in five minutes, cleverly demanded three times the already extravagant sum arranged upon with his master at the other end of the town. He was backed up in his demands by the mixed crowd at the station, composed of hotel touts and fellow-coachmen, content to worry parting strangers while taking no interest in the whys and wherefores of the matter. I am sorry to say that, rather than miss our train, we paid him what he demanded, accompanying the payment with threats which, it is almost needless to add, were never carried out.

In parts of this desolate province are a miserable race of beings who live entirely in low huts, slightly scooped out of the ground and built of peat, the interstices being filled with mud. These people, who are little more than savages, earn a scant livelihood by manufacturing rough brooms from a sturdy plant of the heather family which spreads around them on all sides as far as eye can reach.

The women go about only partially dressed, wearing little else than a ragged skirt and a loose blouse much open at the throat, bare-headed and bare-legged. In the winter they hibernate in their close, stuffy little holes of mud and peat, sustaining themselves on the store of potatoes collected during the better seasons of the year. These people, living far out on the moors, have not yet been reached by the wave of civilization; and, though rather wild and shy, their intense simplicity was a relief after we had experienced the results of progress in Gasselte. We came across two old people living together in an overturned gipsies' cart without wheels. Their lives were of necessity circumscribed but the van had been their home for twenty-five years, and potatoes their unvarying diet. Knowing nothing better, they live there, peacefully waiting for death—their only anxiety the growth of their potatoes, and their labour reduced to digging these and cutting patches of turf for fuel. What an intensely lonely life! It is very rare that they see a human face, and the only sound which reaches their ear is the distant tinkle of sheep-bells as the flocks wander over the moor in their daily quest of nourishment.

We were told by the Gelderland farmer on whose land we were swamped that it is the custom in Drenthe, when a son is married, to build on an extra room or so to the paternal dwelling, and for the young couple to take up their abode in the home thus constructed. From what he said, I gathered that such an addition to the original farm is made for each son. This

arrangement opens vistas of family buildings stretching for miles without a break ; but matters are simplified by the understanding that on the death of the farmer the eldest son takes possession of the original building : presumably the remainder of the married sons move up one. I don't like to wonder what happens when the son of the eldest son marries : there must have been many sons of sons. I wish I had asked for fuller details when the farmer supplied me with these interesting facts. I can only give my word that my knowledge did really come from him, and that I accepted it in all sincerity. It is only when one sees such statements in black and white that the idea presents itself that somewhere a link is missing.

The gold cap I had given in imagination to the northern provinces of Holland is so universal in Drenthe that I think it must belong also to this division of the country. The poverty of the Drenthers creates a difference inasmuch as many of the capped women content themselves with silver *ooryzer* instead of the golden head-covering universal in North Holland. Also, even those who own a cap of solid gold are more economical in their ornaments than their sisters of the North, who rejoice in decorating their headgear with pins and plaques of exquisitely-worked gold thickly studded with diamonds.

It must not be supposed, from my rather pessimistic description of this province, that wealthy boers living on productive farms are unknown in Drenthe ; but I think it will be admitted that they are rare exceptions.

In North Holland, and Zeeland especially, on the other hand, the farmers are noted as being the possessors of enormous fortunes, though, happily, they remain content with their honourable lot as tillers of the soil, and bring up their sons and daughters to be satisfied with the simple lives that sufficed for their long lines of ancestors.

CHAPTER VIII

GRONINGEN

THE inhabitants of Drenthe fondly hope that what Groningen is now their province may in future years become ; for there was a time, three centuries ago, when this fertile and well-drained province wore a desolate and hopeless aspect.


It offered fewer possibilities of redemption, even to the most sanguine, than the Drenthe of to-day. Besides having many trackless and barren moors, this province was at the mercy of the North Sea. Often the waters poured in over the flat defenceless land, destroying the patient labour of months or years. In the end, however, indomitable industry triumphed. To-day, protected by marvellous dykes and drained by innumerable canals, the province of Groningen presents a smiling aspect. There are still parts of it under peat ; but the supply of this useful fuel is rapidly becoming exhausted. The great peat-fields are transformed into green pasturelands and flourishing towns.

It was in the month of May that we visited Groningen, and the kermis was in full swing. It is in spring that the large towns have their annual fairs. To

these festivals flock the travelling circus, the merry-go-rounds, and all the vagrant folk who pass their lives on the road, moving from one kermis to another, until autumn finds them visiting quite small places where the people, not very critical, are satisfied with tarnished costumes and somewhat draggle-tailed shows. But in Groningen all the kermis properties, resembling the country round, were fresh and bright. The booths, dazzling in their new coats of paint, were filled with wonderful attractions. From the fat woman to the mermaid, one and all secured a crowd of eager admirers.

The place was overflowing with visitors from the villages and small towns, and many were the strange costumes which jostled in the big market-ground. We joined a group seated in a gaily decorated tent, patiently waiting for the typical kermis cake which was being cooked before the eyes of the crowd ; and when the poffertjes came, piled on a dish with plenty of butter and sugar, we found them very toothsome indeed. A good woman seated near me, rigged out in her gorgeous best clothes, consumed an incredible number of the somewhat greasy dainties without manifesting any signs of discomfort. I dare say my face expressed too plainly my awestruck wonder at her performance. At any rate, she addressed us with great good-humour, saying that this was her sixth plateful, and that she only awaited her husband's arrival to start on the seventh.

She was evidently well-to-do. Her gold cap was decorated with diamond pins and veiled with blue



muslin, and over that with the finest and most valuable lace. On this really beautiful cap was perched a very small but most atrocious bonnet. In her eyes it was doubtless an extremely smart and becoming article. The tiny surface of sequins was adorned with many varieties of artificial flowers, besides some gorgeous feathers ; orange velvet strings attached to the back enabled the wearer to tie it firmly beneath her chin. They were sewn on too far back : the balance not being well preserved, the bonnet tilted at a ludicrous angle. I wondered why it did not fall off, and then I noticed that some jet dangles had become entangled in the beautiful lace of the cap. I was so much engaged in making bets with myself as to how long the lace would hold out, and wondering whether it would not be charitable on my part to offer to disentangle the sequins from it, that I had not noticed the entrance to the tent of a young couple. As I looked up they were standing in the opening of the tent, gazing with horror-stricken faces at my friend of the bugled bonnet. In a moment they recovered their presence of mind, and turned hastily to depart. Too late, however : the lady looked up from her *poffertjes*, and caught sight of them. The cake dropped from her greasy fingers, and she beckoned to them to approach her, with a look which combined anger and amazement. They walked slowly towards her, encouraging each other with little nudges and looking guilty. I regretted my limited knowledge of the language, for I could not for the life of me make out their crime. Whether it was that

the girl ought to have been polishing brass at home, or that the youth was a *parti* undesirable from the parental standpoint, I shall never know ; but, at any rate, a perfect storm of abuse (I should say) was poured forth upon their shrinking heads. At this moment, with quite an audible tear, the lace gave way ; the bonnet left its perch on the wearer's head, and rested on her back ; the velvet strings almost throttled her, and she had to submit to her daughter's ministrations. The bonnet was untied, and the sad rent in the valuable lace exposed to view. Poor woman ! Her thoughts were now quite diverted from the culprits, and I could gather that she and the girl were discussing the value and age of the lace, and the possibility of its being neatly and invisibly mended. The young man, taking advantage of this distraction, stolidly began to eat the *poffertjes* which he had previously ordered ; and so we left them, resuming our progress through the fair.

We were lucky enough to discover an English friend in Groningen. We had met her some three years before in England, and were glad to improve our short acquaintance. She was as charming and kind and hospitable as English residents in a foreign country always are to their compatriots. She had the good taste to adopt in her house all that was most beautiful and characteristic of the old Dutch method of furnishing, and she had instilled into her willing and intelligent Dutch servants all those little refinements of service and address in which they are rather lacking.

She described to me many social customs which are of as much interest in a book on Holland as the ways and habits of the most primitive peasants.

As soon as she was settled in her Anglicized Dutch house, the residents showered attentions on her in the form of afternoon calls. Her visitors were wont to arrive between two and three o'clock, having during the morning sent a message by a servant to say that the Vrouw So-and-So would call that day if it was quite convenient.

How characteristic is this little formula of the simple directness of the national character! Here is no finesse. If a Dutch lady wishes to pay a call, she pays a call. No ringing of a bell to find the mistress of the house not at home, genuinely or conventionally, then leaving a few cards, and feeling that she has nobly discharged a somewhat irksome duty!

However, my friend soon changed all this as far as she was concerned. She fixed on certain days for being at home to receive her friends, and the hour was printed on her cards—3.30 to 5.30. This the Dutch ladies looked upon as a piece of English eccentricity; but they flocked to her little parties all the same, and enjoyed her tea and cakes, and perhaps in a few years this will be the fashion in Groningen.

She told me that the most usual dissipation she and her husband were asked out to was to "drink coffee." This mild excitement is in the evening about seven, when the men are at home. The coffee is supplemented by stronger drinks, biscuits, and an iced

flat cake, filled inside with something soft and luscious, which is served on small glass plates; this cake or pudding is eaten with the thin silver spoons which every Dutch lady inherits from her parents. My friend gave a little dinner-party, at which she surprised her guests by appearing in a décolleté dress, a fashion which is very little in vogue among the upper-middle classes in the provinces. The charming floral decorations of her table were also a matter of much comment. Indeed, I suppose that she and her home and her English ways were a constant source of surprise and of good-natured gossip to her friends; yet I could see that she was extremely popular, and her strange ways were condoned as an integral part of that person of weird idiosyncrasy, an Englishwoman!

Servants in Holland are excellent, and their wages seldom amount to more than £12 a year—for this sum they are prepared to do almost anything. They keep the house absolutely spotless, even to the scrubbing of the pavement in front of it.

Groningen has an enormous market-place, on which is built a church. This is a fine seventeenth-century building with a very beautiful tower. There are innumerable canals, which are wider than the ordinary.

In these northern provinces I was sadly impressed by the numbers of deformed people and children we met on our walks abroad: indeed, as a race the people struck me as being physically below the average.

Groningen is the chief peat centre of Holland, although the fuel is found more or less all over the

country. Here the digging and preparing it for use is a regular industry, employing thousands of labourers. It is here that it is loaded on big barges, to be sent along the canals to all parts of the country where needed. It is dug out, or, rather, cut out, with a sharp-bladed spade. With each stroke an even slice is dislodged ; these sections are built up in stacks, roofed, and left to dry ; they are then ready to be shipped.

The peat-cutters work transversely across a field, so that occasionally you find in the scuttle one of the triangular corner-pieces, of which there are only two in each field. The Dutch say that to find this in one's scuttle is a sign of the unexpected visit of a stranger.

It is wonderful fuel, this peat ; it gives out a peculiar odour, not unpleasant, and makes a thin blue smoke. Left to itself, it burns slowly under a covering of gray ashes, which hide all the glow, leading one to suppose that the fire is out. Burnt fingers taught me not to trust to appearances in this regard.

In every Dutch household each fire has its *doofpot*, a very handsome copper vessel with a brass lid. Instead of being allowed to smoulder through the night, the half-burnt peats are stuffed into this receptacle, and the tightly-fitting lid excludes the air, quickly extinguishing the fire. These half-burnt carbonized lumps of peat enable the Dutch vrouws to light their fires with great rapidity in the mornings. Good-sized blocks of peat are sold at the rate of ten a penny, so that warmth is not such an expensive luxury for the very poor in Holland as it is with us in England, where a

hundredweight of coal costs at least 1s.—how small a quantity this is of the heavy fuel, and how quickly it flares away!

During the rigours of a Dutch winter, the people, rich and poor alike, keep themselves warm by vigorous skating. The frozen canals become the roadways to all parts, and all the world is out on skates, on business or pleasure bent. It is wonderful to see the many-skirted peasant woman gliding airily along, sometimes balancing a heavy basket on her head, sometimes pushing before her a sleigh evolved from a packing-case and containing a freight of laughing babies. Then, glance at her skates: the blades are probably rusty and notched, and kept on her feet with bits of string which appear to be utterly inadequate.

The Dutch skaters do not, as a rule, practise the intricate figures so beloved by enthusiasts in other countries. Distance and speed are the qualities they strive after, and for these handsome prizes are given in the skating competitions which form the chief amusement of the winter. Frequently the fields are flooded for acres and acres, providing an excellent skating-ground, which has the advantage of being perfectly safe. The ice in the smaller canals gets very much cut up; but in the great centres armies of workers are employed to keep it in the best possible condition. In Groningen and Friesland Dutch skating is to be seen at its very best.

Easter is a time of much rejoicing all over Holland. At this great feast everyone seems to delight in giving. Your dairyman will send you offerings of little lambs

stamped out in butter, with a tail of green palm-leaf. Naturally, the better the customer the more numerous is the flock of lambs. The baker sends his contribution in the form of currant loaves. All the year round the careful housewife has collected the coupons given with each loaf of bread; and at Easter time she receives in return for every 100 coupons one of these enormous currant loaves which the children like so much. It strikes one that the large families who consume many hundreds of loaves during the year must be rather embarrassed by the quantity of currant cakes falling to their share.

The butcher makes no present: his merchandise is too valuable to be distributed gratis. Or I might say that the butcher's offering takes the form of a feast for the eyes. A beautiful young ox, the finest that can be procured, is destined to end his short life in honour of the festival. He is wreathed and festooned with garlands of flowers and greenery, and then led through the neighbouring streets, an object of universal admiration. I hope that the animal enjoys this short-lived triumph, and reckons not of his approaching doom. In small villages, where the killing of an ox is quite an event, the poor beast is led round to the various customers, and each family chooses its joint. These are mapped out as far as possible on the live skin of the animal. This struck me as being a most cold-blooded and unnecessary ceremony; and when in Edam the poor white ox was brought to my little house, it knew, I think, for what dread purpose: its big pink-rimmed

eyes were shedding actual tears. Needless to say that we denied ourselves beef for our Easter dinner. Indeed, I think that many people would become vegetarians rather than have the cruel killing question thus brought continually before their eyes. Not to linger on this melancholy topic, let me mention that eggs are served in unlimited quantities on Easter Sunday.

The great feast-day for the children, equivalent to our Christmas in many points, is St. Nicholas. (Indeed, we borrow the saint, under the guise of Santa Claus ; and our little ones look for him and the treasures he brings them.) This feast occurs on December 5. In the big towns the shops are brilliantly decorated for days beforehand, and it is one of the children's treats to go out with their parents on the eve of St. Nicholas to see the shops, many of which distribute small presents from the bag of the gorgeously-clothed presentment of the saint standing in the doorway.

At home the children meet with the ubiquitous saint once more. The room is cleared, and in he walks, carrying a big sackful of sweetmeats, oranges, apples, etc., which he scatters on the floor. Indeed, the eve of St. Nicholas is called Stroomavond, which means "strewing evening." With all this joy and excitement to usher in the feast, what can be said of the day itself? The excited children go early to bed, to bring themselves nearer the morning. Before they retire they place their largest shoes or sabots in the chimney-place, so that St. Nicholas, coming in the night, with his

black slave, may fill them with good things. The children are not lie-abeds on this eventful day. Up before daylight, their first visit is to the chimney-place, where they find that the saint has stuffed their foot-gear with fruit and sweets. The more important presents are hidden away all over the house, and the joy of discovering the caches is immense.


Naturally, give-and-take occurs. Petrus hands over the beautiful doll he found in a saucepan to Betje, who is quite content to give him in exchange the box of leaden soldiers which were so cunningly hidden in Mother's large work-basket. A description of the typical cakes is given in another chapter. The most delightful one, to my mind, is the enormous ginger-bread doll which each person, young or old, receives—a male figure for the women-folk, and a lady in ruffles and farthingale for the men. It is very interesting to note that most of the dolls are modelled in medieval clothes, the wooden moulds in which they are shaped frequently dating from the fifteenth or the sixteenth century.

In Amsterdam, in the spring-time, there is a most extraordinary celebration. The day chosen is always a Saturday during that period of the year which the Dutch housewife devotes to house-cleaning. It is a "feast" of necessity confined to the poorer quarters of the town, and is almost unknown to the outsider. It is probably the remnant of some very old tradition, and the temptation is irresistible to devote a few words to it as being a very characteristic and firmly-rooted custom.

The day is known as Luilak, which really means "lie-abed." During the week preceding the boys collect corpses of dogs and cats—a task, unfortunately, only too easy, for the canals are infested with this sort of burden. They bury the bodies, which is well ; but, terrible to relate ! the unscrupulous and by no means fastidious gamins resurrect them very early on Luilak Day. Between three and four in the morning the streets become a perfect pandemonium. Crowds of boys rush along, dragging by a piece of string their horrible playthings, and singing at the top of their voices a song to the sluggard. The first verse merely states his character :

Lazy bones, lazy bones, cover yourself, cover yourself !
Lie in bed till nine o'clock !

The song proceeds to threats and warnings, and woe betide the household which is not astir and hard at work on this morning by the time the boys start on their rounds ! On the thresholds of the houses still wrapt in slumber an offering is left in the shape of a typhoid-breeding carcase. Needless to say that this form of amusement is against the laws of the land, and the boys are obliged to keep a sharp look-out. But where in the annals of history was a band of the most efficient policemen able to cope with hundreds of active boys on mischief or pleasure bent ? Year after year, in spite of all precautionary measures on the part of the police, their natural enemy, Boy, gets the better of them, and carries on the pestiferous game. The in-



habitants submit to the terror with resignation, and admit their helplessness by rising much before their usual time, and working hard in the early morning. The mischief is further condoned by a breakfast of hot currant buns, highly spiced, and very much the same as the hot cross buns prepared for Good Friday in England.

Naturally, in Holland, where water is everywhere, parents are frequently startled by the news that their darling Wilhelmientje or Klaasje has fallen into the canal. This is an accident which happens so frequently, and, fortunately, is so seldom attended with dire results, that the poor victim, arriving home a miserable sodden object, is met by a severe scolding and little apparent sympathy—the frequent result of reaction from suspense or shock. Most mothers and nurses have experienced this. I well remember that when I was a child, during the temporary absence of our nurse from the room, my brother eagerly seized the opportunity to play with matches, and set fire to his clothing. At the critical moment Nurse returned, and, smothering the child in blankets, caught him up and called him by every endearing name, her eyes streaming with tears. With trembling fingers she unrolled the blanket, and, hardly daring to look, lest some ghastly burn should meet her eye, found the boy practically unhurt and simply yelling with fright. Then, to his great surprise and disgust, he received a severe shaking and was put into the corner for playing with fire. It impressed on me very strongly that at least some personal

injury must be endured if one was not to suffer the just deserts of getting into mischief. It is natural enough that when a child has been in danger of death by drowning some half-dozen times the shock loses its force, and the foolhardiness of a disobedient child assumes its full proportions.

A small friend of mine was playing in a boat loaded with empty barrels. One end was tied to a ring in the brick wall at the side of the canal; but, wishing to put the boat out of the reach of his companions, he pushed off, one leg on shore, the other on the boat. The tiny bridge thus formed was not elastic, and the slight impetus given to the unattached end of the boat was sufficient to cause the rapid descent of the child into the water. Little Jan was rescued without much difficulty by a good-natured policeman, and sent home for a change and a probable scolding; but home little Jan did not go. He strolled about in his wet clothes, until he considered himself dry enough to escape notice. Then he made the best of his way to his mother's welcome fire. Arrived, he sat meekly on a stool by the fire, until his mother suspected that such unwonted saintliness betokened no good. She called him to her. Jan was evidently reluctant to get up. His mother left off peeling potatoes, put her arm round his warm body, and, looking on the floor, saw the little pools of water which had dripped from him. I was present: so, I think, he came off better than he had expected. This, I am sure, is an incident of frequent occurrence, and it is not surprising that the

Dutch, even in their youth, are martyrs to rheumatism in its severest forms. They fight this cruel enemy with bales of red flannel, in which they have the strongest belief, and with many small devices and charms, such as the presence of a pair of turtle-doves, which is said to be a safeguard against the complaint.

Perhaps it is the outcome of this superstition that every Dutch boy is encouraged to have pet doves and pigeons. The lads build quaint little houses for the birds, and train them to quite a pitch of intelligence, even to the somewhat shady accomplishment of decoying strange birds to become inmates of the gaily-painted pigeon-house perched on the roof. The boys' taste for the decorative art finds further scope in the dog-kennels and hen-houses, the sides of which they paint to represent carefully-laid brick walls inlet with neatly-curtained windows. Then, the entrance to the dog-kennel is a brightly-painted door, with bell and knocker ; it even has its name-plate ; while the gabled roof has chimney-pots and a weather-cock.

Fish in Holland, which are not so varied and plentiful as might be expected, are brought alive to market. Eels are found everywhere in the canals, and a Dutchman would think he was being poisoned were he not sure that either his wife or a servant had skinned the poor live things an hour or so before they were smoking on his table.

The fishermen, who bring their fish up to the door of the house, keep them in small tubs of water till the last moment, giving the *coup de grace* when the pur-

chase is completed. Eels and herrings are pickled and cured in a variety of ways, and in every mode they are an acceptable dish to the Dutchman. Herrings are the staple food of the fisher-folk, and, though often very small, are delicious. In the Zuyder Zee are caught immense quantities of smelts, and occasionally the fishermen still have a good catch of anchovies, which bring them as much as a cent a piece. It was in the golden days when these dainty morsels were plentiful that much of their extravagant jewellery was bought. The fisher-folk, with their simple tastes, hardly knew what to do with the money which a few good hauls of anchovies brought them in.

There is a good University in the town of Groningen. Indeed, education is good and very cheap all over Holland. I believe that all people go through compulsory courses of English and French. In all guide-books on Holland I find that the linguistic powers of the Dutch call forth much admiration. The fortunate writers relate experiences of meeting everywhere with people, even among the poorest, having an excellent knowledge of both languages. I myself must have been singularly unlucky. Even in the largest towns I found that English was universally understood about as much as Chinese, and it was quite impossible to carry on a conversation in French, although many persons had a slight acquaintance with that language. I must, however, admit that those Dutch who do conquer a language have a wonderful facility for realizing the cadence. I have frequently mistaken the nationality

of an English-speaking Dutchman ; but this usually betokens several years' residence in England. Even among the professional classes I have rarely found any language but their own fluently spoken, although, I believe, they have a sufficient knowledge of French, English, and German, to be able to read those tongues with the aid of dictionaries.

CHAPTER IX

FRIESLAND

I HAVE a fond remembrance of Friesland as the only province in Holland where we were served with delicious butter. To qualify this rather startling statement, I must admit that most of my life in the country was passed in hotels, which in many of the smaller towns and villages taught me to test the substance gingerly, as more often than not it had proved to be margarine or very inferior salted butter. Of course, it is possible to buy good butter in all the towns; but it was only in Friesland that we found it invariably good and worthy of the fullest confidence. It is rather misleading, to the would-be housekeeper of foreign extraction, that the people will insist on speaking of margarine as butter, and in Edam, where I kept house for a short time, I had much difficulty in impressing on my affable grocer that it was real butter I wanted. After being disgusted several times by the receipt of inferior margarine, I persuaded Nico to intervene. We went together to the shop, and the grocer finally capitulated, exclaiming that if he had known all along that it was "cow's butter" I wanted

matters would have been simple from the beginning. He did not keep this luxury in stock, and, situated in the heart of a cow country as we were, he was obliged to get me my little supply from Amsterdam.

At the Spaanders Hotel in Volendam the butter was supposed to come from Friesland; but, in the winter at least, there were frequent lapses from this laudable custom. The Dutch have an unappetizing way of serving the choicest butter which might prejudice the fastidious Englisher. They plaster it into small china butter-dishes, flattening it with a spoon, and from this pot everyone helps himself with his individual knife. Those who descend late are obliged to serve themselves from the exceedingly unpleasant mess into which the butter has been converted.

Cheese is made in Friesland; but by far the greater quantity of the milk is converted into butter, which is largely exported to England and distributed over Holland itself. The population is said to be the richest in the country, and the women there are said to be quite the most beautiful. Certainly, as far as clear white skin, blue eyes, and rosy cheeks, can help, they earn the reputation; their beaming healthiness is pleasant to look upon, and is perhaps responsible for their unvarying good temper and civility.

The South of Friesland is partially under water, which forms lakes, having their special delights and uses, especially during skating time and during the season of duck-shooting. The land is immensely fertile; the fields are of a matchless green which is almost dazzling;

picturesque windmills are everywhere to be seen, frequently for purposes of wood-sawing, corn-grinding, etc., rather than for draining the country, as are so many in other provinces. The water-mills in the fields are toy buildings perched on pyramids built of planks, and only two or three feet high. They are not expected to do very hard work ; but they twist round and round in the wind with all their little might and main, doing their duty by the canals and stretches of land entrusted to them.

The province is thickly populated by a farming people who cluster together in small groups of tiled farmhouses, surrounded by acres of pastureland and thousands of sheep and cows. There are only two towns of any importance in the whole of Friesland—Leeuwarden, in the heart of the country, and Harlingen, a busy port town on the North Sea.


Leeuwarden is famous for its cattle-market. One Friday, as we were strolling through the busy streets admiring and criticising the costumes and caps which market-day brings into the town, we were attracted by a sale of horses. The lot "put up" was a scraggy steed that had evidently seen much better days. However, these were so far off that no one in the crowd seemed inclined to make a bid, though jokes in plenty were passed along at the expense of the poor beast and its owner, who preferred to remain unknown to the general public. The auctioneer himself did not disdain to be witty as he endeavoured to persuade someone to start the bidding. Of points the poor beast had many,

its skeleton being but barely covered with a mangy brown skin ; and as it stood there with all four legs bent inwards, and its head drooping in shame at such painful publicity, it seemed a cruel mockery to let the sale go on. At length a bid was made—30 guldens (that would be 50s.) ; and this noble offer started the ball rolling. It was raised by guldens until the sum had reached the generous amount of fifty. The auctioneer, with the patter of his trade, was just about to knock it down to the bidder, when a sailor in the crowd, blushing at the startling sound of his own voice, raised the bid to 60 guldens (£5). This was not disputed, and the crowd found a fresh source of amusement in the evident surprise with which Jack heard that the horse was his. He had but recently landed, for his pockets were full of money, and he handed over the 60 guldens to the auctioneer's assistant, and suffered the bridle to be placed between his unresisting fingers.

Suddenly the humour of the situation seemed to burst upon him. He was rejoiced to find himself the centre of so much notice, and told us with loud guffaws that he had just come from Harlingen on a visit to his mother. He had bid for the pleasure of a new sensation, and because, as is the way with sailors all the world over, his money burnt a hole in his pocket. However, the old mother was waiting at home, and thither he directed his steps, leading his sorry steed and followed by the laughing crowd anxious to assist at "developments." We were too much interested to

consider our dignity, and for once the crowd paid no heed to our appearance among them as we followed at a bashful distance. Arrived in a poor street, the sailor stopped at the entrance to a large high house, evidently let out in rooms to innumerable tenants, who clustered round the door, babies in arms, to discover the cause of all the commotion. What would happen now? A murmur passed through the crowd that the boy's mother lived on the fifth floor. Nothing daunted, Jack seized the bridle firmly, and the wretched beast allowed itself to be led up the flights of stairs to the old lady's dwelling-place. Our courage failed us here. We left the crowd to bustle up the stairs, waiting patiently below until results should declare themselves. Subsequently we had a full account of the happenings. The old lady, a worthy woman wearing the beautiful gold cap and ornaments of North Holland, awaited the arrival of her only son in the little room, which, with a cupboard-like kitchen, composed her home, small indeed, but of exquisite cleanliness. Her feelings on hearing the strange noises on the staircase, evidently stopping at her door, can better be imagined than described.

The door was flung open, and in walked Jack, dragging after him the terrified animal. The crowd, or such of it as could find standing-room on the small landing, remained outside. One may imagine that there was little or no available place in the widow's apartment. Her joy at the sight of her son was entirely swamped in her fright and horror at the intrusion of



the woebegone horse, and after these first sensations had passed away her lamentations and reproaches were loud. Little enough money would be forthcoming now to keep her until his return from his next voyage, and his holiday would of necessity be much curtailed. The crestfallen boy had nothing to say for himself. He stood stupidly holding on to the bridle of the trembling hack while the mother emptied his pockets of the remainder of his money, untouched save for the price of the horse and the cost of his ticket from Harlingen. The sight of the substantial sum still remaining proved to her that her son had resisted all inner calls to the gin-shop. That calmed the old lady, and she turned her attention to the very obtrusive matter in hand. The first thing to be done was to get the horse below, and then to endeavour to sell him for as much of the sum paid as would be procurable. More easily said than done. The animal, summoning all his remaining strength and spirit, obstinately refused to face the precipitous flights of stairs up which he had come so much against his will and better judgment. His determination threatened to prove disastrous to the contents of the room, and the crowd, realizing that discretion is the better part of valour, left the landing and the staircase free for the hoofs of the maddened steed. It was the foremost figure in this crowd that detailed the events to Nico and me waiting patiently below.

In the painful sequel, the poor beast had to be killed up the five flights of stairs. The incident was not

without its amusing side to the witnesses, and Nico subsequently sought out the inconsiderate sailor, and restored him to happiness by making up the difference between the sum he paid for the horse and the amount, not very much smaller, which he received for the carcase. In the excess of his gratitude, the sailor presented me with a small monkey, which he had trained in the most marvellous manner. (On leaving Holland I presented it to the Zoo at Amsterdam.) In addition to this he spent many hours in the construction of a full-rigged sailing-boat immersed mysteriously in a narrow-necked bottle—a souvenir which reached a safe haven in our home in England.

Once upon a time Leeuwarden was on the sea ; but, such mighty battles have the Friesen fought with the invading waters, the present position of the town on the map is ten or twelve miles inland from the northern coast, and all the intervening land is a stretch of fertile and bevillaged grassland.

There is a tower in Leeuwarden that is quite crooked ; it is so much out of the perpendicular as to have occasioned me no small anxiety while Nico painted in its shadow. The drawing of it invariably calls forth many wise criticisms from those unacquainted with the frequent deviation of Dutch architecture from the straight path, and it is unflattering to note how few persons give an artist credit for having an eye at least as correct as their own. It is the same with the crooked tower of the Kampen town-hall. "Don't you think that tower is rather out of the straight?" the critic

will say when the pictures are presented to his gaze, and it is rare to meet with anyone who arrives at the conclusion that the original tower is possessed of an inclination to make a road for itself which is similar to that shown forth on the misjudged canvas.


It was in this town that we eventually found the big gray-blue butter-pots which were to make our friends green with envy on their arrival. These pots range from the half-pound pot of eight cents to the enormous pot standing two feet high and capable of containing goodness knows how many kilogrammes. An earthenware shop is the most fascinating place imaginable : large glazed and much-painted dishes of delightful decorativeness are to be had in infinite variety for a few cents, and beautiful green pigs of the simplest designs are offered as money-boxes. I call them pigs because they possess curly tails and obviously porcine noses ; but they might as well be called anything else.

Since the war broke out in South Africa, quite unmistakable hippopotami and elephants have supplanted the pig in the Dutch child's affection ; but the pigs are still to be had ; I for one remain faithful to them. In the same brightly-glazed green pottery is to be had every household pot reproduced in miniature. Teapots and coffee-pots rest on little stands provided with tiny tests to hold the sparks of turf which will warm the water for the doll's tea-party. Cups and saucers, milk-jugs, stewpots, and bread-pans—everything imaginable is to be had, and a complete set-out of these rather rough objects is a delightful present for

small maids at home, possessing the advantages of being far from costly, little liable to break on its journey, and easily packed into a small space. The pile of things which we could not possibly do without assumed such goodly proportions that we suggested it should be packed and sent to await our arrival at Flushing. Weeks afterwards we came to this station *en route* for England ; but the hamper was untraceable. We met with a paragon of civility in the person of the official in charge of the goods-shed. He inquired and worried for us to such effect that a fortnight after our arrival in London the hamper of earthenware, none the worse for its long journey, reached us, every article safe and sound.

It is related of the Friesens that the country was formerly so immensely wealthy that many of them, to spend their money, built houses which were decorated by door-handles, knockers, etc., of solid gold, and that, further, these millionaires lit their pipes with spills made of bank-notes. Be that as it may, the women still possess stores of wonderful jewellery and lace, and the golden ornaments at neck and forehead are almost invariably studded with diamonds. There is evidently no lack of money in this fertile country.

I am told that Stavoren was formerly a rich and stately city, with a splendid harbour at the entrance to the Zuyder Zee. To-day it is a very dead little city with grass-grown streets, small houses, and a canal. I was amused on my first visit to see a gold-capped old lady sitting on the bank of the canal, endeavouring to pluck the




weeds from between the small bricks which pave the quiet roads. When I passed the same spot hours later, there was the same old lady with the same basket and knife ; but there was no perceptible decrease to be marked in the numbers of the intruding weeds. However, the sun was shining, and no doubt the old lady felt she was useful ; and there are sensations less to be desired than those gained by basking in the sun and rejoicing in a comfortable sense of well-doing.

I went into a little shop to endeavour to buy some pens ; but customers were so rare, and stock so immovable in the little place, that the shopkeeper and myself spent hours looking for the pens—she was convinced that she had such articles in the shop, and would not allow me to depart on the quest elsewhere. One or two villagers who had looked in for a gossip remained to aid in the search and offer suggestions as to probable whereabouts. When at last I triumphantly unearthed the pens from a round red tin marked “Thé,” I was scarcely surprised to find them rusted beyond all use. This slight defect, if, indeed, it was apparent to the old dame, did not trouble her in the least ; rather did it add to their value. However, I was delighted to buy half a dozen nibs from her at the cost of 2d. each, and a large packet of sticky sweets from the glass jars in the window. It was as well that I had not much choice about the latter purchase, as she insisted on preserving a certain symmetry in her pots, and would only serve me in such proportions as would maintain a certain equal height of sweetmeats in each bottle. I

suggested a larger helping from a jar containing a brightly-striped sweet ; but this seemed to upset her so much that I signed to her to treat me as she would. The little Stavorenites whom I met coming out of school were not too difficult to please, and I relieved myself of my sticky purchase to our common satisfaction. These were beyond the Dutch average of pretty children, though they had nothing to aid their good looks in the way of picturesque dress and caps. They were almost invariably blue-eyed and flaxen-haired, with chubby rosy cheeks ; and Nico easily persuaded one or two of them to sit still and suck while he painted them, under a fire of severe criticisms, tempered with indulgent condescension, from various hurriedly-assembled parents and relations. The elders would have been better pleased had they been permitted to carry off such of their offspring as attracted the painter's eye, to dress it in its best, wash its face, change the sabots for eccentrically decorated kid boots, and in various ways complete the transformation, and then return it to sit woodenly in a small armchair reverently nursing a photograph-album or a nosegay of artificial flowers.


There is an interesting legend to account for the presence of the sand-bank which effectually closes the harbour of Stavoren to commercial enterprise in these latter days. When the town was at its zenith of prosperity its population, like that of ancient Venice, consisted principally of merchant princes. One of the richest of these left his widow the sole mistress of



untold wealth. On a historical occasion she loaded a ship with valuable cargo, and, entrusting it to an honest captain who had been in her husband's service many years, commissioned him to visit various European ports, and exchange his goods for others of the rarest and choicest to be found. The captain, who did not approve the imperious and extravagant habits the lady had adopted since the death of her spouse, returned to Stavoren after having exchanged his cargo for one of wheat. That, he informed her, was the most precious merchandise to be found in the world. It is scarcely surprising that this result was bitterly disappointing to the capricious widow, and unproductive of any good effects. So angry was she that she ordered that all the corn should be thrown overboard. I think we may take it for granted that another captain was chosen for the next errand of a like nature ; but history was made. The grain took root, collected sand and soil, increased and multiplied, and eventually filled the mouth of the harbour to an extent which admits only of the passage of quite small craft. My sympathies are with the widow, and I hope that many of her ships brought her wealth and beautiful things before the consequences of her reckless and unpremeditated act interfered so seriously with the commercial prosperity of the town.

This story was told, in a mixture of French, Dutch, and English, by an exceedingly intelligent grocer to whose shop I had gone for the purpose of replenishing my store of sweets with which to conciliate models.


It was rather heartless of me to desert the poor old lady of the glass bottles and the rusty nibs; but, really, the grocer's shop-front was so interesting that I could not resist giving him a share of my custom. He had hung over his door an extraordinary collection of commercial symbols, many of them medieval, of which he was immensely proud. There was a life-size model of a cow's head painted in a check-board pattern of blue and white, which did away with any harrowing ideas of decapitation. It had been taken down from an old house that had been a butcher's shop in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Likewise he possessed several heads, both male and female, which, I believe, used to indicate to the passers-by the presence of a druggist within the building which they adorned. These heads are always represented with open mouths, presumably ready to swallow pills and medicines in any quantities. They are summed up under the generic title of "gapers"; but there are about as many varieties as there are heads—bearded, shaven, crowned, hatted, bareheaded, as the artist's fancy prompted. Another medical sign, of which my grocer possessed two examples, is the basket of flames from which is issuing an animal that may well be anything. I credited it with being a dragon, but am open to correction. The grocer's mark was an oblong lump of painted wood, decorated at each corner with a golden loop. This represented adequately enough a sack of flour or sugar to the medieval intelligence which invented all these signs; for of all the collection of this notable grocer,



the latest object dated from early in the seventeen hundreds. It was from him that I gleaned my knowledge of the signs and symbols I had so often remarked on old buildings in many of the Dutch towns, buildings which had long since given up all rightful claim to the ownership of such signboards. However, these latter are carefully preserved in their original places as far as possible, and very rightly so. I did not ask my friend the grocer how he had become possessed of his treasures; but I gathered from his descriptions that he had picked them up all over Holland, and principally from contractors engaged in the pulling down of old houses. He had the history of each at his fingers' ends; and, when we had exhausted his outside stock, he led me to a room behind his shop, and showed to my astonished gaze a really splendid collection of old brass and delft. He was a bachelor, and was served by an old bonneted housekeeper; but no one was allowed to touch his treasures, which he cleaned and attended to himself. I realized that it was quite useless to attempt to purchase any part of his collection. He mentioned in many instances the prices paid for various objects—prices that only increased my envy of him, for the things themselves would have represented a very considerable sum in the hands of the most reasonable dealer in antiques. Every now and then he would be called off from the reverent handling of an exquisite bit of delft to serve children with groceries; but only his body attended to business—his mind was clearly with the beloved treasures all the while.

It seemed very cold-blooded to buy pennyworths of sweets from this ardent collector, with whom I had a moment previously been eagerly comparing notes, learning many of the subtleties of his hobby; but I conquered my diffidence, and was rather rejoiced to find him sufficiently human to charge me double as much for my purchase as the stout Dutch mother who bought a few sweetmeats of the same sort and at the same time as I. It is several years since I was in Stavoren. I should dearly love to know how my grocer's collection is growing, if, indeed, it still exists; or whether fate has decreed that he should exchange it for a more material love in the form of a Stavoren damsel, who would supplant the delft and brass with artificial flowers and china dogs. I returned to the shop that day to show Nico this collection, much to the delight of the worthy enthusiast. He was so much pleased with our interest and compliments that he almost robbed himself of a rather good brass spoon to present it to me. I unconsciously gave him a loophole of escape by protesting that it was too kind of him to give it, though I scarcely dared offer to buy it. He agreed that perhaps it was too kind, and with a sigh of relief replaced it on its nail, rather to my surprise and disgust.

We left the little dead city and travelled third-class to Hindelopen. I thought it would be an excellent opportunity to converse with the people and inquire into the subtleties of the women's headgear and costume; but at the end of our journey we decided that in future our



information should be gleaned in any way but that. We sat on uncomfortable wooden seats, I hedged in by a stout fisherman clothed in shabby velveteen, redolent of bad cigars and stale fish, on the one side, and on the other by an angular person, who prodded me far more often than was necessary or desirable with an exceedingly sharp bare elbow. Opposite me Nico was tightly wedged between two fat Dutch women, evidently returning from market. It was sufficiently obvious that at least part of their investments comprised exceedingly violent cheese and strongly-scented dried fish. After the train had started these two *commères* struck up an acquaintanceship across Nico, who disappeared from my view for the remainder of the journey, to emerge in a dusty and breathless condition at Hindelopen, our first stopping-place. It is not difficult to believe that we descended with as much alacrity as possible; and when we recovered sufficiently to regain full possession of our senses and to compare notes as to our experiences and the insight gained into the habits and customs of the Dutch peasants, by our short journey in their company, we decided that the game was not worth the humblest wooden match, and that in future we should pursue the even tenor of our way in more or less solitary state.

Happily, the village of Hindelopen speedily acted as a stimulant. One of the most delightful little spots in Holland, its charming inhabitants parade the toy-box streets, and sit in the gaily painted and decorated dolls' houses which outside Hindelopen would only be

admissible in comic opera. Here the scenery is adequate to the performers, and the *tout ensemble* is entrancing. The little ones are not too shy, and are delightfully clean and pretty. I was happy when I could collect a little crowd and treat them to cakes and sweets, and here I had no grocer antiquary to distract my interest and admiration. The weather during our short stay was bad, and twice in my lonely peregrinations through the village, while Nico painted for dear life in the most charmingly ridiculous little cottage imaginable, I was gallantly escorted on my way—once by a hero of some five or six summers, staggering under the weight of an immense green umbrella, and again by a youth at least ten years old, who strutted by my side smoking a large cigar and struggling to keep the rain off me with a small and much-battered parasol. I hope that these gallantries were prompted by true affection and courtesy; but I fear that the largesse which crowned the deeds was responsible for their display. Still, the ideas were there, and the occurrences pleased and amused. The mothers of the many children whom I supplied with sweets were always ready with a bright smile and a greeting, and many were the invitations I received during my triumphal progress to “com ben” and have a cup of coffee.

We did our duty by Harlingen, and found it a busy port, chiefly engaged in the exportation of the farm produce of the province.

The canals are broad and teem with traffic, and the

town is protected from the North Sea by huge dykes. Looked at from railways, Friesland in its scenery resembles North Holland closely. It is flat, green, studded with windmills, and enormous low farmhouses stand among clusters of out-buildings thatched with moss-covered straw.

toylike mills with thatched roofs and brightly-painted woodwork ; the under part is of red bricks. In this district the mills are for various purposes. Some are the water-mills of which I have spoken ; others are sawmills, flourmills, etc.

Zaandam, which we visited some weeks later, is on the left bank. It is celebrated as having been the working-place of Peter the Great. Here he learnt ship-building, and visitors are shown a little house said to have been built by his own hands, which does not reflect much credit on its architect.

At last Amsterdam burst upon the view. What an impressive sight ! A long line of brilliant red roofs broken by lofty church-towers of graceful and dainty architecture, many of them dating from Spanish times. Among them stands out in strong contrast the low copper roof of the Lutheran church, a dazzling green in the bright sun. At either end of the town stretch the docks, with colonies of big ocean-bound steamers topped by forests of masts and rigging. It was after mid-day when we arrived at the Handelskade, the docks, where we found ourselves in the imposing society of the steamers bound for India.

We made our way to the Dam, and were glad to get some food before taking up our quarters in a hotel near the station. I am afraid I shall not be giving news of startling interest when I say that Amsterdam is entirely built on piles. Perhaps it is a little less well known that the Dam, which is the chief of these artificial islands, is the centre of a network of canals.

They can be likened to a cobweb. There are five principal canals. These are crossed, as a spider's daintily-built house, by many smaller waters, which bisect it diagonally.

My first visit to Amsterdam was not a long one. I was eager to get into the country, and to the delightfully costumed peasant-folk of whom I had heard so much from Nico, who had worked among them in all the most out-of-the-way and least-known places ever since he was a student at the Amsterdam Academy.

After a stay of some weeks in the country I began to look upon it as a great treat to make a day trip to Amsterdam, where I could lay in a store of books and sweets.

Amsterdam's chief claim to beauty lies in the peculiarities of its quaint architecture. The people are as uninteresting as possible, and, with a few exceptions, as unpicturesque in their attire as indifferently-dressed Europeans generally are. Among the exceptions are the girls from the old orphan houses ; one meets them every now and then in the course of a day's peregrinations. How grateful I felt towards them for their quaint caps and cloaks ! One uniform I especially loved : that of the Town Orphanage, to which only the children of the burghers of the city of Amsterdam have the right of entrance. The costume is black and red (the colours of the city), and the dainty white muslin caps veil a broad band of silver encircling the head. At each side of the forehead is a corkscrew-like

ornament in gold, which fastens the cap to the hair or to the band—I never could make out which.

The houses, even in the best streets, are of necessity narrow, owing to the peculiarities of their foundations. Many of the roofs are gabled, and all seem to be slightly different in the scalloped design which decorates the outer edge of the gables. For what they lack in width they make up in height. A row of these ornamented gables, with their variously-shaped red roofs outlined against the gray watery sky, is a charming picture both in colour and in line. One may search Amsterdam in vain to find its rival.

A characteristic of the old aristocratic houses is the ancient glass which still fills the window-panes. It dates back to the time when glass was a luxury for the rich, and very uncertain in quality. Each pane seems to vary in colour, and its tint is thrown up by the white muslin blinds behind, to which the appearance is given of a chequered material in faint shades of mauve, yellow, green, and gray.

The top floor of every house in Amsterdam is further decorated by an arrangement of pulleys, sometimes exquisite bits of medieval wrought-iron work. The doors, and more especially the staircases, are obviously intended only for personal use; the furniture enters the house by means of these pulleys through the windows. The pavement is generally of small red bricks, and each housewife attends with scrupulous cleanliness to her stretch of frontage.

Nieuweramstel is a suburb of Amsterdam. There

are others ; but for us, in search of memories of Nico's student days, this made an interesting pilgrimage. Among the young and enthusiastic groups of artists in Amsterdam, there are not a few who suffer from insufficiency of pocket-money. When all available resources are exhausted, there comes a time when the poverty-stricken but always buoyant painter takes refuge in the Mill, a haven still picturesque, though denuded of its wings. This desirable residence may be used for the small sum of 2s. a week. It is taken for periods varying in length according to the good or ill luck of the tenant. Although it would seem to be quite an ideal and permanent home for any young man not overburdened with wealth, it is a point of etiquette among the students that he who among them is the poorest at the moment shall inhabit the Mill. There are some few bits of furniture which go with it—various odds and ends left by previous tenants—not worth the trouble of carrying away. Still, there they are, a boon to a tenant whose claim to the abode consists in his lack of funds.

Although Nico himself was never the occupant of the Mill, he tells me tales of glorious parties at which he was often a guest. On those occasions each friend brought his contribution to the feast. The dearth of knives, forks, plates, and other paraphernalia only added to the general hilarity. On the remains of the meal the host lived frugally until the next gathering.

There is a tale of a poor but proud sculptor who, unknown to his comrades, lived for some weeks on a

sack of flour. I presume that he did not eat it dry, but made a sort of paste of it with water. I believe that when at last his friends found his hiding-place he had become so fat that he was scarcely recognisable.

At the time when we visited the Mill it was tenanted by a young friend of Nico's—a sculptor—the handsomest and happiest young man imaginable. We took with us our own meat and rolls, and he provided excellent coffee.

It was in March that we visited Haarlem, a quiet, old-fashioned town within a three-hours' walk of Amsterdam. I am ashamed to say that I insisted on the prosaic but more restful mode of transit offered by the railway train. While still at some distance from the town, an exquisite odour of hyacinths reminded us that we were approaching the world-famed nurseries of Dutch bulbs ; as we drew nearer the scent became almost overpowering. We alighted at the station, and found it crowded with visitors leaving the gorgeous beauties of Haarlem. Each and all were loaded with fragrant blooms or with gaudy tulips, which made up in vivid colouring for what they lacked in perfume. We took a cab—open, in spite of the cutting March wind—and instructed our driver to take us to Zandvoort. That is a little seaside town a mile or two distant from Haarlem itself. We drove through the town and out into the open country.

I had often been impressed by the wonder of the vast stretches of flat green fields, with never a hillock to break their line, and only the dark narrow canals to

cut up their extent. How is it possible adequately to describe this country, stretching as far as the eye can reach, and all ablaze with the most vivid colours which Art combined with Nature produces? There are acres of yellow tulips, red tulips, rose-coloured tulips, and all the wonderful variety of striped tulips, and here and there among their brilliant neighbours a patch of tulips snow-white. After the tulips you see many-coloured and sweetly-scented hyacinths; then dainty narcissi and yellow daffodils with their leaves of tender green; more tulips, more hyacinths; and so on for miles the bright flowers cover the earth.

After this heavenly drive, from which we returned with our carriage filled with flowers, there was nothing for it but to stay at Haarlem until Nico should have noted down his impressions of the colour and beauty of the scenes we had passed through.

Haarlem is a sociable town. It is a favourite abode of retired Government officials, especially those who have held positions in the Dutch colonies. They have built themselves charming villas, which seem to include the most wayward flights of the ambitious architect's fancy. They have in their cathedral what they deem the most beautiful and perfect organ in the world. Haarlem was the birthplace of the great Dutch painter Franz Hals. The town is situated in the heart of the verdure-clad dunes which are such an important feature all round the coast of the North Sea.

It was at Edam that I had my short experience of housekeeping in Holland. It is quite a small place


THE TULIP-FIELDS, HAARLEM

A WONDERFUL sight in spring ; as far as the eye
can reach spreads this wonderful carpet of richly-
coloured, scented flowers.

pleasantly full of fads. She always wore her charming Volendam costume, with its many and voluminous petticoats. Her ambition was to have a real coral necklace. She confessed to me that the beads she wore were only glass. Her parents were poor, and there were many small brothers and sisters at home, to whom potatoes were more necessary than corals. Neeltje was growing up, and had an admirer in the person of the scarlet-coated Volendam lad who brought us our fish several times during the week. His father had his own boat: how, then, could he walk on Sundays along the dyke with a girl who wore a necklace of red glass beads? On the spot I gave her a little present to start a fund for the precious corals: all her wages were commandeered by her poor hard-working mother.

Some days later she told me, with many gestures and wide bright eyes, that she had seen a second-hand necklace for sale for 30 gulden (£2 10s.). I did not give her the money there and then; but I am sure my readers will be glad to know that before our three-months' stay had ended Neeltje's coral fund had reached such proportions that the Sunday before we left she walked on the dyke beaming with the pride of possession. For a few hours surely her simple soul tasted unalloyed bliss!

The church in Edam is of enormous dimensions. It was built at the time when the city contained many more inhabitants than it has now, when the congregation does not half fill the church. A curious custom



still holds among the parishioners, that of providing their own light in church. A brass bracket candlestick is affixed to each pew, and on Sunday the occupier brings a candle for his own particular stick. By this means the large church is sufficiently lighted at no cost to the churchwardens.


The farms round Edam are large and rich in pasture. The most fitting cattle in this brilliant green country are surely the black-and-white cows one sees in the fields, looking like the animals out of a Noah's ark, as they stand silhouetted against the gray sky. They are not merely ornamental, however. Almost all the farms are engaged in cheese-making, and, although the industry is not confined to this part of the country, the description of one farm is practically the description of all. There are no unpleasant revelations to be made anent Dutch cheese-making. The whole process is carried through with the most exquisite and cleanly daintiness.

One is always welcome to visit the farms and to watch the simple primitive methods. The good housewives take the keenest pride in their picturesque interiors, bright with shining brass utensils and the highly-polished if cumbersome pieces of furniture which constitute the family heirlooms.

The farmhouses are large, square, one-storied buildings; the roof is pyramidal; and the large space between the ceiling of the dwelling part and the apex of the outer roof is utilized as a granary for the storage of fodder sufficient to last through the winter months.

The living-rooms are always on that side of the house which faces the inevitable canal, and a flower-garden with sanded paths brightens the approach to the door. On the other three sides are the dairy, the cow-house, and the coach-house. The stables are in an out-building. The cow is the pampered darling of a Dutch farm. When the summer wanes and the nights get chilly she is warmly clothed in blankets, and when the cold weather comes she is brought in for the whole winter—and to what a very sumptuous apartment does she come! With her tail carefully tied up to the ceiling by means of a pulley, which permits her to lie down, she can survey with pleasure, though more probably with lazy indifference, the treasures of old delft plates, bright brass utensils, the highly-glazed brown bowls, and the bunches of peacocks' feathers, which adorn the beams of her stable. The walls are of bright green and red tiles, and all is spotlessly clean. What a contrast to an ordinary English cowhouse!

When the curd is prepared, it is put in moulds, of which the lids are pierced, and left in the cheese-press for fifteen hours. The Dutch farmer, despising all modern inventions, continues to use the ancient cheese-press of his fathers, which is entirely worked by hand. The next process is the salting of the cheese, which takes from ten to fourteen days, according to the size; then the cheese is well rubbed with melted butter, to prevent any cracks in the rind; lastly it is washed in vinegar, and then allowed to lie for a month or so to ripen. One fine morning, after being rubbed with



linseed-oil to improve their colour, the cheeses are piled in a boat or on a dog-cart (I mean, of course, a cart drawn by dogs), and thus find their way to one of the big markets.

I believe that Alkmaar is the most important cheese-market of to-day : at any rate, it was there we followed the golden balls whose transformation from milk into cheese we had watched with so much interest. We arrived on a Thursday night (Friday is the market-day, and no hours of daylight are wasted). We rose at six in the morning, and I was not quite sure whether I was awake or still dreaming in my boxlike bed, when I found myself on the market-place with a very wide-awake, Nico already arranging his drawing materials. We were caught in a shower of large golden apples, and I drowsily wondered whether the garden of Hesperides was in Holland, and whether the famous rivalry between the three great beauties was for the possession of an Edam cheese.

From all the neighbouring farms and villages cartloads and boatloads of the cheeses were fast arriving. The globes were rapidly thrown from one to another of the market-folk, and finally piled in huge pyramids, which ended by covering the market-place. At first nothing was distinguishable—there were just a babel of noises and dazzling effects of colour. Then the confusion righted itself. On the high-wheeled carts, painted yellow, blue, and green, stood peasants throwing the big round cheeses from hand to hand. It was like a gigantic juggling performance.

The actual buying and selling was not in full swing till about ten o'clock. There was an extraordinary amount of hand-shaking, and I thought to myself, "What a friendly feeling there is between the silk-capped buyers and the sturdy farmers!" Not content with one good shake, they again and again grasped each other by the hand with amazing heartiness. I was disillusioned when Nico told me that no bargain is considered to be completed without at least three hearty hand-shakes.

When the greater number of the cheeses had passed from the possession of their makers to the merchants and exporters, a group of new-comers appeared, adding a note of colour to the brilliant scene. These were the porters, dressed in white linen and wearing straw hats of yellow or green or blue. Every couple carried a kind of wooden stretcher of a colour similar to that of their hats.

The competition among the groups of porters was quite exciting. When sixty or eighty cheeses, each weighing about four pounds, were built up in a pyramid on the stretcher, it took all the strength of the robust young Dutchmen to lift it from the ground. Once started, they swung along at an amazing rate to the public weighing-machine, and then to the spot indicated by their patron, the buyer of the cheeses. It was the one who sold who paid the porters, at the rate of twopence for every hundred pounds. By mid-day the market was almost over, and both buyers and sellers turned their thoughts to dinner.

The remainder of the life of a Dutch cheese is without much incident. Before it leaves its native land it is dressed in the brilliant magenta coat we all know so well.

If we had not been carried away by our cheeses, our natural course would have been to visit Volendam after Edam, from which city it is separated by a two-mile walk along a narrow dyke; or, if you are lazy, you may be slowly conveyed thither in a queer little man-towed boat which plies the canal running alongside the dyke.

The same green fields, the same canals, the same black-and-white cows, and the same heavily-fleeced sheep, are to be seen on either side. As the boat turns the last corner, the same red roofs appear—the red roofs of Volendam. There are no gables here, however: there is only the slanting pyramidal roof topping the single story of the little houses, painted bright green or blue.

We quitted the boat, and found ourselves on the outskirts of the most charmingly ridiculous village that ever existed away from dreamland or comic opera. We could scarcely wait to be shown our room in the modern hotel, kept by a Dutch family of father, mother, and four grown-up daughters, before we hurried out on to the dyke which traverses Volendam from end to end. One descends steps on either side to get into the heart of the town and among the fisher-folk who compose the population.

Nico's pictures will give a better idea of their peculiar dress than any words from my pen; but I may

venture on a few remarks. For example, I cannot refrain from stating a fact which struck me rather forcibly. Here in Volendam the women are not decked out with jewellery, as are the costumed peasants of many other villages. Their coral necklace is their only ornament ; their pride lies in the number of their petticoats. When a well-to-do Volendam lady is ready for church on Sunday, the circumference of her hips is a wonderful and amazing sight. She cultivates a peculiar swagger, which swings the mass of clothing at each step, presumably to allow critical dames to count and envy the petticoats. It was summer-time when we were there, and I thought of Hans Andersen's mermaid whose grandmother comforted her with "Pride will suffer pain" while oysters were decorating and pinching her tail. The poor women who cannot afford the real thing pad their hips liberally with cotton-wool and refrain from the tell-tale swagger.

When the fishermen are not in their boats on the Zuyder Zee, they are to be met with all over the place in stolid, silent groups, chewing tobacco or smoking long cigars. They sit for hours on their heels, winter and summer alike ; and, although I have lived among them for many weeks and carefully watched them, I have never heard one make a remark to his neighbour. They can talk, however : when they rise from their haunches, with many grunts, they utter a few strange words, and I have heard them talk to Nico for quite a long time—very slowly and very deliberately, but still sufficiently to convince me that they really can converse.

Their wives and daughters have plenty to say on all occasions. The little children are very shy, very silent ; they make excellent models, never changing their position, never getting tired or bored, and always interested in watching the strange being who pays cents and dubbeltjes for most simple and apparently aimless standing or sitting for an indefinite time. They are dressed in the same garments, naturally on a smaller scale, as those worn by their grandfathers and grandmothers. The afternoon we arrived, while Nico was fixing up his studio, I endeavoured to make friends with a girl of three holding tightly the hand of a small brother. She drew back at my approach, with her finger in her mouth, and the boy howled lustily. My knowledge of their language, though limited to one word, was sufficient to enable me to gain my end. "Koekjes!" said I, tentatively holding up a two-cent piece. The baby still looked doubtful; but the girl smiled and held out her hand for the coin. I did not mean to bring my game to a speedy conclusion. I held out more cents, and pointed to the "kook" shop. The girl confidently gave me her hand, and together the three of us crossed to the baker's shop. A gradually increasing crowd of children of all ages, who had been watching us from a distance, followed, determined to miss nothing of my movements. I bought biscuits and sweets, and, with my hands and pockets full, I bravely faced the throng. With much giggling and great (apparent) timidity, the bravest among them advanced and accepted sweets ; and, seeing this, the

rest of the children threw their fears to the winds, invaded the shop, and were treated to what they liked. Afterwards I always had a following during my walks, and from among them Nico selected his models.

To descend from the dyke and stroll in the heart of the village well repays one for the variety of evil odours to be endured. All the refuse is thrown into a shallow canal, which is also the main sewer of the place. That the Volendamers are fisher-folk is emphasized by the little heaps of rotting fish one meets at every step. In winter, when the canal is frozen, matters are by no means improved by the fact that one's eyes and nostrils are assailed by various abominations usually covered by the friendly water. All roads (such as they are) lead to the church, a plain and uninteresting building, but never empty. The population to a man are devout Catholics.

Apart from wealth of skirts, one may judge their worldly status by the size of the silver buttons on the man, or by the rows of coral (particularly the elaborate clasp) of the woman's necklace. These treasures, which are handed down from parent to child, are some of them of great value.

As will be seen in the illustrations, all the Volendam houses are built with high, pointed roofs. This shape is a protection against the gales, which are extremely violent at certain seasons. They are built bungalow-fashion, and the one floor is divided or not, according to the size of the house. The beds are built in the walls, like cupboards, and are entered by means of

a short ladder. The water from the canal serves for washing clothes, eating utensils, and, indeed, everything washable. For drinking there are little wells in the house, each covered by a loose board. The well-water is full of visible insects and tiny fishes; but the Volendammers are conservative, and despise a filter, as they consider it does away with the full flavour of their water and makes it almost tasteless! The housewives spend their days in washing, washing clothes, washing the bricks in front of their houses, washing their houses; unfortunately, there seems to be no time left for washing themselves. However, one is inclined to be indulgent—their industry in other directions may well earn the gratitude of all lovers of the beautiful. Much of the charm of the country may be attributed to their love of bright, fresh colours, which are never allowed to be dimmed by dust and dirt. The very bricks with which they build seem to be redder and better laid than bricks elsewhere are; the window-frames are of brightest green, with gleaming white sills and doorstep; and the curtains are dyed a bright yellow with saffron. Behind such a house imagine a background of green fields and gray sky, and you have a picture it would be hard to beat. Add to this innumerable houses of the same type, with inhabitants to match; and can you wonder that I linger over Volendam, the most charming village in the whole of this quaint land? It was too charming to abandon entirely. Though we left this part of Holland during the autumn months, the last week in November saw us once more in Volendam, where we

gave the children a historical feast for St. Nicholas, which falls on December 5.

At the feast of St. Nicholas presents and good wishes are exchanged, and cakes are offered at the shrine. Two of these are very seductive—one a delicately-flavoured gingerbread, made up in the most fantastic shapes; the other a deliciously-light pastry, fashioned tunnel-wise, the hollow filled in with a kind of soft almond icing. Above all, St. Nicholas loves the little ones. Nothing pleases him more than to act the part of good fairy and convey to them delightful surprises in the most unheard-of and mysterious ways. In Volendam the children are of the poorest, and, the days of miracles being passed, St. Nicholas has not much to bring them; but the good Dominican nuns, who manage the poor schools, try to make the day as happy as may be with the means at their disposal. On December 5, 1900, the feast was celebrated in a way the little Volendamers will not easily forget.


At the Hotel Spaander was staying, besides ourselves, a French artist, who agreed with us that the Dutch children should have a real good time for once. In this we were supported by our host Spaander and his wife and their family of blooming daughters. In the wooden hotel there is a "coffee-room," long and low, of really vast proportions. (In the summer-time half of it forms the drawing-room.) At the farther end of this apartment is a small stage, with wings, etc. For this occasion (thanks to Spaander) the whole of it was covered in spotless white (summer sheets, I suspect),

tables were erected, and upon their surface were arranged about a thousand toys and as many oranges and cakes. A white throne was placed for St. Nicholas. The costumes we designed and carried out ourselves. For St. Nicholas (our French friend) there was a long white woollen robe falling over a purple silk underdress, a cape of costly old yellow brocade, and a gorgeous jewelled mitre, to crown the head made venerable by long white hair and beard. The dress of the Black Slave (Nico) was equally correct and effective—a long tight-fitting garment of green velvet, showing a white robe underneath; an orange silk turban wound round the black locks of a disguising wig and lighting up his cork-black face. So much for the preparations, completed with considerable trouble and a great deal of amusement.

Nico painted a large poster, on which was set forth a notice to all the children of Volendam that at 6.30 a boat would land upon the quay, bearing St. Nicholas and his faithful slave laden with gifts. One may easily imagine the joy and delight of these poor fisher children, into whose uneventful lives never enters the joy of what English children call a treat. They crowded about the announcement, and read that St. Nicholas would come laden with gifts. Who can say what wild, beautiful hopes filled their hearts? Before five o'clock the youngsters began to assemble. The quay was crowded with them; so was the narrow road leading from the quay to the hotel. The parents also were there, quite as excited and almost as credulous as their

children. Indeed, all Volendam turned out to welcome the saint. Rain began; but, although it soaked their poor clothes, it seemed to have no damping effect upon their spirits, all afire as they were with expectation. Meanwhile the saint and his slave rowed out to their boat, and I made my way to the quay to witness the arrival. It was now almost dark; but in the faint light one could still distinguish the fishing-boats which always crowd the harbour, their tall masts and sails dimly defined against the gray sky, and their narrow flags gently flapping in the rain. At one point there was an opening between the boats, a glimmering water-way, where the initiated expected the boat to appear. The time passed slowly. It was seven o'clock; the saint was half an hour late, and everyone was very wet. I found it difficult to imitate the cheerful good-humour with which all Volendam waited.

At length a blaze of Bengal light far out on the water revealed the saint—a venerable figure standing in the boat, crosier in hand, evidently blessing the expectant crowd. In a few moments the boat reached the landing-place. With blare of trumpets, and by the light of the torches, a procession was formed. Would that I could describe the faces and figures illumined by the flickering glow! Soon the warm, well-lighted café was reached. The saint sat on his throne, and his good slave rapidly distributed presents to the little ones. How glad one was to see them safely housed from the inclement weather! Alas! they were very wet; but, as not one of the seven



hundred coughed during the distribution, it may be concluded that the young Volendamers do not easily take cold. Their surroundings are so damp that they are almost amphibious.

Every face beamed with happiness—the genial St. Nicholas and his hard-worked slave; the Spaander family, all helping vigorously; the three fine tall Volendamers who, in their yellow scarves of office, kept order so gently and gaily; the very youngest child—all the faces were sweet and patient, and aglow with the pleasure either of giving or of receiving.

The crowd of children looked plump and healthy, and, although many garments were much patched, there were no rags—the poorest looked cared for and comfortable.


Seven hundred of them were made happy with toys and fruit; but there was no scrambling or pushing, nothing but patient, glowing expectation, and then still more glowing satisfaction. All too soon it was over: the last child clattered down the long room with its precious armful. The Black Slave was very weary (he had worked like a proverbial nigger), and we retired to our couches, to dream it all over again.

Afterwards we heard from the school-teachers and the children's parents that most of them believed firmly that it was the real saint descended from heaven who had laid his hands on their heads in benediction as they received their presents from the Black Slave.

In Amsterdam we had bought Friesche skates, made for long-distance skating—the blades shallow and long,

ending in a curve. We skated from Volendam across the Zuyder Zee to the little island of Marken, and O the wonder of skimming across the ocean to a far-away island! On the bitter afternoon the sun shone feebly from a pale gray sky, against which the black frozen sea outlined itself in vigorous contrast. Now and then an ice-boat, with its sails taut in the breeze, would bear down upon us, and in a moment, with a rush and a roar, it had passed into the dim distance. One had to keep a keen lookout lest one should quit the track that had been made by the expert, which, winding by the dangerous holes, led from Volendam to Marken. Gradually through the mist Marken outlined itself, with its church-tower, and quaint houses, and the masts of its fishing-boats, clear cut against the red of the evening sky. Low down on the horizon a new moon curved its golden sickle in the dark blue, and the frosty breeze bore the aroma of the coffee-stalls in grateful welcome.

Surely Marken has no rival for quaintness in garments and customs. As in all the primitive fishing-villages, there are but two variations of costume, the man's and the woman's, entirely irrespective of age or station, as far as general appearance is concerned. Up to the age of four years the boys are dressed as girls; afterwards, for two or three years, they pass through a sort of chrysalis stage, during which they are clothed as girls to their waists and as boys from waist downwards. It is, however, possible to distinguish the sexes from the earliest ages, as the boy baby's headgear culminates,



like the great Panjandrum, in "a little button on top." A very distinctive feature of the women's get-up is the long ringlet which falls from under the tight cap on either side of the face. This is by no means unbecoming to the fresh round face of a girl; but it has an effect of startling frivolity when decorating the countenance of a sour-visaged woman well on in life.


The Marken women do exquisite needlework: their clothes and house-linen are elaborately embroidered in white and coloured threads. The children's aprons are all of one pattern—a blue ground printed with bunches of large grapes. This design, which is a favourite in the island, is exceedingly decorative.

Every winter Marken is entirely submerged for a certain time. The islanders are accustomed to be awakened in the morning by a collision with some of the few pieces of movable furniture floating close under the ceiling of the room. In anticipation of such an emergency, the houses are built with two stories, and all possess small boats, which serve as the only means of moving about during the floods. A few years ago the indignation of the islanders was aroused by the high-handed action of an enterprising Mayor, who insisted on the building of a dyke round the cemetery and the proper burial of the dead. Owing to the graves being shallow and the floods frequent and insinuating, coffins and their gruesome contents were left high and dry in the open on the waters subsiding. Frightful

as this seems to our more civilized minds, the Markenites were accustomed to it, and considered it a desecrating innovation when the ridiculous fads of the Mayor were translated into vigorous action.

Nico could not be torn from Marken. A messenger on skates was sent to Volendam for painting materials and a few other necessities, and we took up our abode in the primitive and not over-clean hotel until our enthusiasm should wane or be to some extent satisfied.

Next morning obstacles of an unexpected nature put a damper on our plans. The Markenites—an exceedingly religious people, professing a very strict mode of Lutherism—believe the making of pictures to be a transgression of the First Commandment. When Nico, burning with enthusiasm, planted his stool and easel in one of the narrow frozen streets, he was received with loud murmurs of disapprobation. A crowd gathered and watched his preparations with sulky anger, and offers of reward were received with contempt. In spite of opposition, he continued sketching in backgrounds of house and boats, and, after much discussion among themselves, one or two of the elder boys and girls offered to pose as models, no doubt with misgivings as to future parental chastisement when their crime should be made known. However, money is scarce in the winter, when the boats are ice-bound and there is no fishing to be done, and I hoped that the guldens would soften the wrath of the authorities. We



learned afterwards from the lady of the hotel that it was because of Nico's nationality that he was allowed to finish and carry off his sketches unharmed. A French artist had been stoned in the summer for taking similar liberties ; his canvases were spoilt by the sand and dirt was thrown at them. Only a few years ago, before the introduction of the steamers which carry trippers from Amsterdam to the island during the summer months, photographers and artists were actually in danger of their lives, the infuriated Markenites threatening to cast them into the sea.

While Nico painted in the open I explored the village and some of the interiors. In general respects one of these latter closely resembles the others. They are enchanting. What first strikes the eye is the picturesque fireplace of old blue and white tiles, which form a capital background for the brass and pewter utensils that hang against them. The walls are further decorated with fine old delft plates. One meets here also with the beds built in the walls all round the chief room. In the daytime the curtains are drawn aside to show to the admiring gaze of the visitor elaborately-embroidered pillow-cases and counterpanes. In one shop I bought several pieces of the print used by the women for sundry garments. The designs are always repeated for the island: fashions there do not alter: the women to-day wear cottons of the same design as those bought by their great-grandmothers.

As we did not relish the prospect of a forced sojourn in this rather unfriendly island, we left Marken at the first rumours of a thaw, which would render approach to or departure from the village impossible for some time, and returned to Volendam for a day's rest before proceeding on our travels.

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IN this book Mr. Menpes endeavours pungently, vividly, and briefly to make Whistler known to the world at large as he himself knew him fifteen years ago. And it must be remembered that Mr. Menpes knew the artist absolutely at his best. He saw and worked with him at the very zenith of that brilliant career, and at the moment when Whistler was engaged on his greatest masterpieces Mr. Menpes was at his side.

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As the book is enriched with many examples of the choicest species of Whistler's art, as well as with many of Mr. Menpes's own studies of the great artist, it may easily be imagined that it is in itself an exhibition of line and colour never yet excelled in this country. All the examples have been engraved and printed at the Menpes Press under the supervision of the artist, who will himself print the original Whistler etching appearing in the Edition de Luxe.

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BY MORTIMER MENPES

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